

GENDER STUDIES

VI SEMESTER

CORE COURSE

BA HISTORY

(2011 Admission)



UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

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UNIT-I

INTRODUCTION

Invisibility of women, women in History

History centred on men's lives, activities, and events does not represent a history for all. It is argued that only white, middle class, heterosexual men count in history and that non-white, non-middle- and upper-class/caste men as well as women have been removed from our view of the past. Women are either completely absent from historical narratives, or their presence is described in ways that are insignificant to the important events of history. The invisibility and marginalization of women in history is a problem keeping the study of history from realizing its full potential. Before 1970, women's history was rarely the subject of serious study.

Two significant factors contributed to the emergence of women's history. The women's movement of the sixties caused women to question their invisibility in traditional history texts. The movement also raised the aspirations as well as the opportunities of women, and produced a growing number of female historians. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, one of the early women's historians, has remarked that "without question, our first inspiration was political. Aroused by feminist charges of economic and political discrimination. . . . we turned to our history to trace the origins of women's second-class status."

Sex and Gender

Sex denotes biological difference that one is born either as male or female. It is natural and it is a fact. Gender is a social construction. It gives meaning to the fact of sex. Sex difference becomes pertinent only after meanings came to be attached. Gender based discriminations are rampant and the socio-culturally defined characteristics, aptitudes, abilities, desires, personality traits, roles, responsibilities and behavioural patterns of men and women contribute to the inequalities and hierarchies in society. Gender differences are man-made and they get legitimized in a patriarchal society. The difference is constructed historically and has legitimized by several ideologies, social practices and institutions such as family, religion, caste, education, media, law, state and society. "Male" and "female" are sex categories, while "masculine" and "feminine" are gender categories. Aspects of sex will not vary substantially between different human societies, while aspects of gender may vary greatly. It is a not a fixed category. Its meaning depends on the location, time, cultural frameworks within which it is performed.

Simone de Beauvoir opines that society perpetuates gender inequality. Men and women are constantly engaged in subject-other relation where the man is the subject and the woman the other. It is based on this myth of the woman as inferior other that gender inequality perpetuated in society. Simone de Beauvoir states that 'One is not born a woman but becomes one'. In her opinion there is not 'essence' of a woman, a woman is constructed as such by men and society. Patriarchy makes use of sexual difference by arguing that biologically speaking women are unequal to men- an argument that naturalizes inequality as a preordained condition of biology itself. She espouses thus: While sexual difference is real and unalterable, it cannot be the grounds for injustice and inequality.

Some examples of sex characteristics:

- Women menstruate while men do not
- Men have testicles while women do not
- Women have developed breasts that are usually capable of lactating, while men have not
- Men generally have more massive bones than women

Women are biologically capable of bearing children. This is not a disputable statement. But the following values associated with are social:

- a. Motherhood becomes a symbol of the true female
- b. No woman is complete unless she bears children
- c. Nurturing a child is the woman's natural job

Biological determinism moots gender discrimination. It views:-

- a. A woman is made to be a mother.
- b. The lower wages are justified because woman is weaker and less efficient
- c. Women's writing is rejected because it deals with less important issues like home.

Feminists argue that gender is an ideology because

- a. It naturalizes what is a social performance (the women's role)
- b. It naturalizes inequality between the sexes by proposing that the biological differences are the determining factors rather than economic, social or educational ones.
- c. It reinforces the difference in social performance (men's role, women's role) as natural, preordained and unalterable.

Patriarchy, Patriline

Anthropological evidence suggests that most pre-historic hunter-gatherer societies were relatively egalitarian, and that patriarchal social structures did not develop until many years after the end of the Pleistocene era, following social and technological innovations such as agriculture and domestication. However, research has not yet found a specific event.

Patriarchy manifests itself in various forms of discriminations, inequalities, hierarchies, inferior status and position of women in society. Patriarchy literally means rule of the father in a male-dominated family. It is a social and ideological construct which considers men (who are the patriarchs) as superior to women. Sylvia Walby views that it is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. Patriarchy is based on a system of power relations which are hierarchical and unequal where men control women's production, reproduction and sexuality. It imposes masculinity and femininity character stereotypes in society which strengthens the unequal power relations between men and women.

Patriarchy is not a constant as gender relations which are dynamic and complex have changed over the periods of history. The nature of control and subjugation of women varies from one society to the other as it differs due to the differences in class, caste, religion, region, ethnicity and the socio-cultural practices. Thus in the context of India, Brahmanical patriarchy, tribal patriarchy and Dalit patriarchy are different from each other. Patriarchy within a particular caste or class also differs in terms of their religious and regional variations.

Gerda Lerner in *The Creation of Patriarchy* (1986) has opined that any single cause cannot explain the historical moment when patriarchy was established. Patriarchy has been conceptualized and analyzed by several feminist scholars in different ways. Feminists have challenged patriarchal knowledge, ideology, values and its practice. Despite a range of common themes within feminism, disagreements exist amongst the feminists in understanding patriarchy. All feminists do not like the term patriarchy for various reasons and prefer the term gender and gender oppression. Patriarchy has remained a relatively undefined concept and some feminist scholars are at unease with the use of the concept of patriarchy when it involves the notion of a general system of inequality. Michele Barrett argues that the use of the term patriarchy assumes that the relation between men and women is unchanging and universalistic. The use of the term often involves confusion between patriarchy as rule of the father and patriarchy as men's domination of women. The term patriarchy necessarily implies a conception of women's oppression that is universalistic historic and essentially biologicistic and that it incorrectly leads to a search for a single cause of women's oppression.

Patriarchy is not assumed as male oppression on women in India because of the role that men have played in the emergence and growth of women question in India. In a hierarchical society often gender oppression is linked with oppressions based on caste, class, community, tribe and religion, and in such multiple patriarchies men as the principal oppressors is not easily accepted. Feminist historiography made radical breakthroughs in redefining patriarchies in the context of hierarchies of caste, class, community and ethnicity. Feminism is an awareness of women's oppression and patriarchy is a dominant means by which this oppression is executed.

Despite the ideological differences between the feminist groups on many factors for women subordination Marxist feminist views that the subordination of women developed historically with the development of private property. Frederick Engels in *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) stated that with the emergence of private property, women's housework sank into insignificance in comparison to man in productive labour. The world historical defeat of the female sex with the establishment of capitalism based on private property ownership by men did away with inheritance of property and social position through female line. Thus maternal authority gave place to paternal authority and property was to be inherited from father to son and not from woman to her clan. The bourgeois families which owned private property emerged as patriarchal families where women were subjugated. Such patriarchal families became oppressive as men ensured that their property passed on only to their sons. They argue that it is not women's biology alone but, private property and monogamous marriage, economic and political dominance by men and their control over female sexuality which led to patriarchy.

Socialist feminists argue that women's subordination is rooted in the social and economic structure itself. Socialist feminists look at both relations of production as well as relations of reproduction to understand patriarchy. Gerda Lerner (1986) explains how control over female sexuality is central to women subordination. She argues that it is important to understand how production as well as reproduction was organized. The appropriation and commodification of women's sexual and reproductive capacity by men lies at the foundation of private property, institutionalization of slavery, women's sexual subordination and economic dependency on male. Juliet Mitchell believes that gender relations are a part of the super structure and patriarchy is located in the ideological level while capitalism in the economical level. She argues that patriarchal law is that of the rule of the father, which operates through the kinship system rather than domination of men. Mitchell stated that women fulfill four social functions (i) They are members of workforce and are active in production, (ii) they bear children and thus reproduce human species (iii) they are responsible for socializing children and (iv) they are sex objects. Therefore women can achieve emancipation only when they liberate from each of these areas. Eisenstein defines patriarchy as a sexual system of power in which the male possesses

superior power and economic privilege. Patriarchy is not the direct result of biological differentiation but ideological and political interpretations of these differentiations.

When the patriarchal mode of production articulates with the capitalist mode, women are prevented from entering paid work as freely as men and are reinforced by patriarchal state policies. The state is a site of patriarchal relations which is necessary to patriarchy as a whole as it upholds the oppression of women by supporting a form of household in which women provide unpaid domestic services to male. Patriarchy is connected to both relations of production and relations of reproduction. Unconventional feminism challenges the traditional public/private divide and the influence of patriarchy not only in politics, public life and economy but also in all aspects of social, personal, psychological and sexual existence. This was evident in the pioneering work of radical feminists. Kate Millet (*Sexual Politics*) and Germaine Greer (*The Female Eunuch*), Simone de Beauvoir (*The Second Sex*), Eva Figes (*Patriarchal Attitudes*) drew attention to the personal, psychological and sexual aspects of female oppression. It is because of the patriarchal values and beliefs which pervade the culture, philosophy, morality and religion of society that women are conditioned to a passive sexual role, which has repressed their true sexuality as well as more active and adventurous side of their personalities.

Radical feminists developed a systematic theory of sexual oppression as the root of patriarchy which preceded private property. They challenge the very notion of femininity and masculinity as mutually exclusive and biologically determined categories. The ideology of motherhood subjugates women and perpetuates patriarchy, which not only forces women to be mothers but also determines the conditions of their motherhood. It creates feminine and masculine characteristics, strengthens the divide between public and private, restricts women's mobility and reinforces male dominance. While sex differences are linked to biological differences between male and female, gender differences are imposed socially or even politically by constructed contrasting stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* pointed out that women are made and not born. She believed that greater availability of abortion rights, effective birth control and end of monogamy would increase the control over their bodies. Kate Millet in '*Sexual Politics*' defined politics as power structured relationships, which is not only confined to government and its citizens but also to family between children and parents and husband and wife. Through family, church and academy men secure consent of the very women they oppress and each institution justifies and reinforces women's subordination to men with the result that women internalize a sense of inferiority to men. Men use coercion to achieve what conditioning fails to achieve. She proposed that patriarchy must be challenged through a process of conscious-raising and women liberation required a revolutionary change. The psychological and sexual oppression of women have to be overthrown. Shulamith Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex* believes that the

basis of women's oppression lies in her reproductive capacity in so far as this has been controlled by men. She stated that patriarchy is not natural or inevitable but its roots are located in biology which has led to a natural division of labour within the biological family and liberation of women required that gender difference between men and women be abolished.

Emancipation of women necessarily calls for challenging patriarchy as a system which perpetuates women's subordination. Several structures of society such as kinship and family, class, caste, religion, ethnicity, educational institutions and state reinforce patriarchy. The first lessons of patriarchy are learnt in the family where the head of the family is a man/father. Man is considered the head of the family and controls women's sexuality, labour or production, reproduction and mobility. In a patriarchal family the birth of male child is preferred to that of a female. The former is considered as the inheritor of the family. The Indian joint family is the "patriarchal family and it was constituted by a group of persons related in the male line and subject to absolute power of the senior most male member. According to Gerda Lerner, family plays an important role in creating a hierarchical system as it not only mirrors the order in the state and educates its children but also creates and constantly reinforces that order. Family is therefore important for socializing the next generation in patriarchal values. The boys learn to be dominating and aggressive and girls learn to be caring, loving and submissive. These stereotypes of masculinity and femininity are not only social constructs but also have been internalized by both men and women. While the pressure to earn and look after the family is more on the man, the women are supposed to do the menial jobs and take care of their children and even other members of the family. It is because of these gender stereotypes that women are at a disadvantage and are vulnerable to violence and other kinds of discriminations and injustices. Systemic deprivation and violence against women: rape, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, female feticide, infanticide, witch-killing, sati, dowry deaths, wife-beating, high level of female illiteracy, malnutrition, undernourishment and continued sense of insecurity keeps women bound to home, economically exploited, socially suppressed and politically passive.

Patriarchal constructions of knowledge perpetuate patriarchal ideology and this is reflected in educational institutions, knowledge system and media which reinforce male dominance. More subtle expressions of patriarchy was through symbolism giving messages of inferiority of women through legends highlighting the self-sacrificing, self-effacing pure image of women and through ritual practice which emphasized the dominant role of women as a faithful wife and devout mother. Laws of Manu insist that since women by their very nature are disloyal they should be made dependent on men. The husband should be constantly worshiped as a god, which symbolized that man is a lord, master, owner, or provider and the *shudras* and women were the subordinates. It legitimized that a woman should never be made independent, as a daughter she should

be under the surveillance of her father, as a wife of her husband and as a widow of her son. While in ancient India (Vedic and Epic periods), women were by and large treated as equal to men, the restrictions on women and patriarchal values regulating women's sexuality and mobility got strengthened in the post-Vedic periods (Brahmanical and Medieval periods) with the rise of private property and establishment of class society.

Patriarchal constructions of social practices are legitimized by religion and religious institution as most religious practices regard male authority as superior and the laws and norms regarding family, marriage, divorce and inheritance are linked to patriarchal control over property biased against women. A person's legal identity with regard to marriage, divorce and inheritance are determined by his or her religion, which laid down duties for men and women and their relationship. Most religions endorse patriarchal values and all major religions have been interpreted and controlled by men of upper caste and class. The imposition of *parda*, restrictions on leaving the domestic space, separation between public and private are all gender specific and men are not subject to similar constraints. Thus the mobility of women is controlled. They have no right to decide whether they want to be mothers, when they want to be, the number of children they want to have, whether they can use contraception or terminate a pregnancy and so on and so forth. Male dominated institutions like church and state also lay down rules regarding women's reproductive capacity.

Matriarchy and Matriliney

Matriarchy can be described as a kind of social system where the mother figure and women have authority. The word matriarchy is coined as the opposite of patriarchy; from Greek *mater* "mother" and *arche* in "to rule". Gynecocracy is sometimes used synonymously to represent matriarchy. Matriarchy can be also defined as a form of social organization where women are the dominant gender, a female is the family head and title is traced through the female line. This system is also called as androcracy. It can be also called a system of government by females and another technical description attributed to matriarchy refers it as a gynocentric form of society.

Matriliney is a system in which descent is reckoned in the female line. The children in matriliney belong to the mother's clan.

Johann Jakob Bachofen and Lewis Henry Morgan argued that early societies were matriarchal. Some contemporary feminist theory has also suggested that a primitive matriarchy did indeed exist at one time. Morgan did research in the indigenous society of the Iroquois of his time. Claims for the existence of matriarchy rest on three types of data: societies in which women make the major contribution to subsistence, societies in which descent is traced through women (i.e., matrilineal), and myths of ancient rule by women. But myths of ancient female dominance invariably highlight women's failure as rulers and

end with men assuming power. Anthropologists believe that these myths function as a rationalization of contemporary male dominance. Women may have greater political power in matrilineal societies than in other societies, but this does not imply matriarchy. Thus, while Iroquois women could nominate and depose members of their ruling council, the members were male and enjoyed a veto over women. Crow women could take ritual offices, but their power was severely limited by menstrual taboos. Women may also have indirect influence through their involvement in material production. In many horticultural societies women produce the bulk of the group's dietary staples. Even so, men often devalue this vital contribution, and usually have the power to expropriate it. The universality of male dominance is not, however, natural or biological, because the form of, and reasons given for, patriarchy differ in most cultures. Through studying the various ways that male dominance is organized and justified, anthropologists have concluded that it is culturally constructed.

Domestic violence

We define domestic violence as a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone.

Physical Abuse: Hitting, slapping, shoving, grabbing, pinching, biting, hair pulling, etc are types of physical abuse. This type of abuse also includes denying a partner medical care or forcing alcohol and/or drug use upon him or her.

Sexual Abuse: Coercing or attempting to coerce any sexual contact or behavior without consent. Sexual abuse includes, but is certainly not limited to, marital rape, attacks on sexual parts of the body, forcing sex after physical violence has occurred, or treating one in a sexually demeaning manner.

Emotional Abuse: Undermining an individual's sense of self-worth and/or self-esteem is abusive. This may include, but is not limited to constant criticism, diminishing one's abilities, name-calling, or damaging one's relationship with his or her children.

Economic Abuse: Is defined as making or attempting to make an individual financially dependent by maintaining total control over financial resources, withholding one's access to money, or forbidding one's attendance at school or employment.

Psychological Abuse: Elements of psychological abuse include - but are not limited to - causing fear by intimidation; threatening physical harm to self, partner, children, or

partner's family or friends; destruction of pets and property; and forcing isolation from family, friends, or school and/or work.

Domestic violence can happen to anyone regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender. Domestic violence affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels. Domestic violence occurs in both opposite-sex and same-sex relationships and can happen to intimate partners who are married, living together, or dating.

Domestic violence not only affects those who are abused, but also has a substantial effect on family members, friends, co-workers, other witnesses, and the community at large. Children, who grow up witnessing domestic violence, are among those seriously affected by this crime. Frequent exposure to violence in the home not only predisposes children to numerous social and physical problems, but also teaches them that violence is a normal way of life - therefore, increasing their risk of becoming society's next generation of victims and abusers.

UNIT-II

SCANNING THE INDIAN SOCIETY THROUGH WOMEN PERSPECTIVE

Brahminical patriarchy, stridharma/pativratadharm

Subordination of women is a common feature of all stages of history and it is prevalent in almost all parts of world. The form of that subordination is conditioned by the environment (social, cultural and economic) in which women have been placed. The subordination of Indian women seemed more severe by its legal sanction.

Caste and gender, according to Uma chakravarti, are the organizing principles of the Brhamanical social order. The sexuality of women is the subject of social concern. Brhamanical social organization constructed a closed structure to preserve land, women and ritual quality (caste) within it. These three are linked and applied to organize and control female sexuality. The honour and respectability of men is protected and preserved through their women. The appearance of puberty thus marks a profoundly 'dangerous' situation and the ritual related to the onset of puberty indicates the important relationship between female purity and purity of castes.

The anxiety about polluting the caste and the quality of the blood through women is best demonstrated in the horror of miscegeny (varnasamkara). Most polluting are those castes which are the product of reprehensible unions between women of a higher and men of a lower caste. The ideologues of the caste system had a particular horror of hypogamy (pratiloma) and reserved highest punishment for it.

The safeguarding of the caste structure is achieved through female seclusion. Women are regarded as the entrance into the caste system. The lower caste male whose sexuality is a threat to upper caste purity is prevented from having sexual access to women of the higher castes so women must be carefully guarded. When the structure to prevent miscegeny breaks down the Brahmanical texts consider that the whole elaborate edifice of social order that they built up has collapsed. Brahmanical texts viewed all women have the power to non-conform, to break the entire structure of Brahmanical social order. For when women are corrupted all is lost. To prevent such a contingency women's sexual subordination was institutionalized in the Brahmanical law codes and enforced by the power of the State. Women's co-operation in the system was secured by various means- ideology, economic dependency on the male head of the family, class privileges and veneration bestowed upon conforming and dependent women of the upper classes and finally the use of force when required.

The process of caste, class and gender stratifications is the three elements in the formation of Brahmanical patriarchy. Many of the myths of Rigveda reflect clear relationship of women with sexuality. Excluding the demoniac women and apsaras, the Aryan patriarchal families had established a certain degree of control over women. Their position in a pastoral economy with the household playing an important part in production requires them in the performance of rituals. But the custom of Niyoga which was the privilege of affinal male kinsmen indicates that control over female sexuality was firmly established.

Post Vedic period witnessed two developments. Aryan women's roles in the sacrifice as well as in production were marginalized. Their labour was restricted to household. The need for monitoring women's sexuality is viewed as a threat, particularly in relation to the sacrifice. The earliest references to the need to specially guard wives are also evident during this period. The Satapatha Brahmana expresses the fear that the wife might go to other men. It also states that Divine raja Varuna seizes the woman who has adulterous intercourse with men other than her husband.

Women's 'essential nature' came to be identified with their sexuality in the post-Vedic period. The innate nature of women was represented as sinful. Satapatha Brahmana states that a woman, a sudra, a dog, and a crow are the embodiments of untruth, sin, and darkness. The sage Agastya states that it has been a woman's nature ever since creation began to cling to a man only when he prospers, and desert him in difficulty; their fickle natures are modeled on the flashes of lightning. Anasuya complains that normally women do not know right wrong, and even though they are dependent on their husbands for protection they wander about with their hearts subject only to their own desires. Tryambaka, the author of Stridharmapaddhati says that women are innately promiscuous, fickle minded, lacking in love, and unfaithful to their husbands even when closely guarded. It is difficult to deal with the innately overflowing and uncontrollable sexuality of women.

Manu, the ancient lawgiver and the prominent ideologue of Brahmanical system dealt explicitly the notion of the essential nature of women that is sexuality. According to him women must be closely guarded day and night regardless of their age. By carefully guarding the wife a man preserves the purity of his offspring, his family, himself, and his means of acquiring merit. After conception by his wife, the husband becomes an embryo and is born again of her that is the wifeness of a wife. Husband should carefully guard his wife to keep his offspring pure and ensure his future. Women should be thoroughly restrained. The essential nature of women drives them into seeking satisfaction anywhere, anytime and with anyone. In the opinion of Uma Chakravarti women's uncontrolled sexuality was perceived as posing a threat and the narrative and normative literature of ancient India is thus full of references to the wickedness of women and of their 'insatiable' lust.

One of the devices by which the mechanism of controlling women is operated through the ideology called **stridharma/pativratadharm**a. It is the main instrument through which the patriarchal Brahmanical society subordinated women. They were given schooling in stridharma. These wifely codes/pativratadharm were internalized by women. Therefore women attempted to live up to the idealized notions of pativrata. Chastity and widely fidelity are some of the constituents of pativrata. They accepted stridharma and considered it as the highest expressions of their selfhood. In the opinion of Uma Chakravarti pativrata can be considered as the most successful ideologies constructed by any patriarchal system. Women themselves controlled their own sexuality and believed that they gained power and respect through the codes they adopted.

Women as biological creatures are representatives of a wild or untamed nature. Through the Stridharma the biological woman can be tamed and converted into woman as a social entity. The wicked and untamed nature of woman can be subordinated and conquered by the virtue of the ideal wife. Once the tension between nature and culture is resolved women can emerge as paragons of virtue. Uma Chakravarti opines 'pativrata may be regarded as the ideological purdha of the Hindu woman.' There are many instances of pativrata ideals in Hindu mythologies. Ramayana created the role models for men and women. There are idealized brothers and sons; but the most powerful and long lasting of these deals is that of Sita, the long suffering, patient, loving and faithful wife of Rama. Arundhati could stay the motion of the Sun. Savitiri could win back her dead husband from Yama. Anasuya could transform evil men with lustful desires into babies.

Force by knismen is prescribed to keep woman firmly within the stridharma. If they are not guarded, stated Manu, they bring sorrow to two families, the one into which a woman is born and the one into which she is given. Special responsibility in guarding women is laid upon the husband who is represented as most vulnerable to the loss of his progeny through the infidelity of women. Law and custom must ensure that women are kept under the control of patriarchy. The king was vested with the authority to punish errant wives. It shows that the scriptures advise the use of violence to punish women particularly wives, to make them conform to the requirements of wifely fidelity.

Widowhood

Widowhood prevailed as malice in India till it was banned legally by Widow Marriage Act of 1856. It was a social evil in practice among the upper caste Hindus. It was a state of social exclusion underwent by a woman after the death of her husband. On the husband's death, a widow had to tonsure her head and remove the symbols of the married state i.e., bangles, *mangal sutra* –a necklace with black beads, and vermilion, a *kumkum* mark on the forehead. She was allowed to eat simple food and in small quantity.

She was required to wear simple white saris and to sleep on a straw mat on the bare floor. Even the sight of her by others was regarded as a bad omen. Uma Chkravarti traces the reason for this rigid mechanism of social control on the widow to her sexuality, which was a source of immense attraction. Through her husband, a woman was considered capable of reproduction. As a wife, her sexuality was considered auspicious, but the very sexuality, which provided her, a place in the society, became a curse to her when she becomes a widow. Soon after her husband's death steps were taken under the name of ritual to deprive the widow of her sexuality. The most painful ceremony a widow underwent to mark her new status as a widow was the tonsure. Tremendous pressure was exerted on the widow to undergo the humiliating ceremony. Even if the family of the widow did not prefer the tonsure of their daughters or daughters-in-law, they were forced to do it under the compulsion of customary laws whose proponents were the Brahmins. Uma Chakravarti relates the forced tonsure of the widow with the material benefit derived out of it by the Brahmins. The major beneficiaries for *dakshina* in various ways were the Brahmins themselves since almost three fourths of the money spent was given to the Brahmins.

In addition to the tonsure, a widow was subjected to a number of other rituals, which were designed to restrain her insatiable sexuality. She was allowed to eat simple food and in small quantities. She had to observe *vratas* for which she had to abstain from food and drink. She was required to wear simple white saris and to sleep on a straw mat on the bare floor, the wearing of jewels and make up was forbidden. All these measures were to deprive a woman of her innate emotions and instincts. Indicating the futility of depriving women of her happiness in life, Tarabai Shinde, the Author of *Mazipur* asks those who were responsible for the sad plight of the widows: "Women still have the same hearts inside, the same thoughts of good and evil. You can strip the outside till it's naked, but you can't do the same to the inside, can you?"

The custom of child marriage produced child widows too. Since the concept of *Pativrata* was not applicable in the case of child-widows, premature death of the husband was attributed to her sinful existence in the previous birth. They were socially excluded when they become widows. This made their life miserable and lifelong household drudgery is the fate of those widows who have given the privilege of living at in-law's house. They were taken as burdens in their in-laws house and in several instances they were abandoned in crowded streets or holy places where they had to eke out their living by doing menial jobs. Many of them turn to prostitution and beggary. The trauma of widowhood as narrated by widows in their personal experience reveals that they showed considerable concern for the existential condition of widowhood. In the absence of a source of income, the widow has to depend upon the relatives of either affinal or natal homes. No respectable family even of a lower caste will have her for a servant. She is completely ignorant of any art by which she may make an honest living. She has nothing

but the single garment, which she wears on her person. Starvation and death stare her in the face; no ray of hope penetrates her densely darkened mind. The only alternative before her is either to commit suicide or worse still, accept a life of infamy and shame. This bleak picture of widow's life as far as their material existence is concerned was well illustrated by the concern expressed by Haimabati Sen after her husband's unexpected death. She says in distress, "my parents had finished their duty towards me. No one was responsible any longer for this child widow. If I needed a single pie, I would have to beg it from others. What about my husband – he had taken a third wife and thereby cut a child's throat – what provision did he make?"

This description of the struggle of a widow for survival must be understood in the context of the unending life of drudgery that a widow had to undergo. This drudgery was mostly associated with the sonless widows especially child widows. Maintenance of childless young widows was considered as a burden by both the affinal and natal families as they had to be provided for their maintenance throughout life. Devoid of any means of existence, the widow was destined to take up the household drudgery and she had to bear the insults and humiliation of a life of ceaseless labour in return for the maintenance provided to her. In joint families, the frequent pregnancies, childbirths and subsequent childcare made the labour of widows much in demand. The life story of Godubai, a child widow and the first inmate of Sharadha Sadan, (widow Home opened by Pandita Ramabari in Maharashtra) illustrates how as a child widow in her in-laws' house she managed ably the home and the farm – two large undertakings. Even if the household chores were unbearable to a widow she had no choice as cooking and household works were the only area in which she received some training. With the intention of starting a home for widows and orphaned girls, Karve, social reformers from Maharashtra, asked Parvati Athavale, a young widow, "If I start a home for widows, what works would you be willing to do in connection with it?" "If you start the Home I will accept the position of a cook. I do not think I know how to do anything else", was the reply of the young widow.

Dependence for physical existence, in the absence of any acquired skill except household work, made the life of widows an unending life of drudgery until they breathed their last. Sister Subalakshmi, social reformer from Madras Presidency, testifies that most widows, who had never been wives or who had failed to become the mothers of sons, were condemned to be mere household drudges, slaving away from morning till night, perpetually on the verge of starvation and with never a word from anybody.

Pandita Ramabai, social reformer from Maharashtra, was objective enough to recognize that the economic dependence of widows was one of the reasons for their lifelong drudgery. In the *High Caste Hindu Woman*, published in 1887, Pandita Ramabai outlines that it is idle to hope that the condition of her country women will ever improve

without individual self-reliance. So, when she opened widow homes, she made provision to provide training to the inmates to become teachers, governess, nurses and home keepers and other types of skilled workers.

Rasundari Debi, the author of *Mazipuram*, narrates that she was widowed only at the fag end of her life; still she found widowhood both shameful and sad. She comments on her widowed state thus "Even if a woman with a hundred sons is widowed, she is regarded as most unfortunate by the people. They always want to tell you that you have been widowed. A very objective opinion made out of her own experience as a widow provides an insight into women's undisclosed displeasure towards widowhood. It reveals that women were not able to reconcile with widowhood even at an advanced age. This questions the veracity of the society's notion that widowhood in the old age was a natural state in a married woman's life and hence, they were destined to cope with it. It also indicates the fact that if an old widow like Rasundari Debi could feel the humiliation of being a widow, the degree of disgrace felt by young widows could be more in depth and magnitude. But the abolition of *sati* in 1829 naturally brought forward the question of widowhood into the forefront of debates related to gender.

The widow Marriage Act of 1856 brought into effect by the efforts of Iswarchandra Vidysagar, a prominent social reformer from Bengal. A few widow marriages were conducted under the auspices and financial support of Vidhyasagar. Though it banned legally, the taboo on widowhood still not eliminated fully from Indian society.

Food as a medium of proliferation of caste

Food is one of the means by which caste retained its hold in the society. Traditionally, each caste has developed its own food culture depending on their social, economic, environmental and other factors. Women are the upholders of caste taboos and rituals at home. Therefore, they give basic lessons of caste identity to the next generation. Though marriage and inheritance play an important role in maintaining caste identity, women do have a marginal role in them. But women as custodians of home decide what food to cook and eat. As each caste has its own food habits, women are expected to adhere to the particular food habit of that caste. Food is one of the integral constituents of caste identity determined and maintained through women. They have to safeguard caste purity through guarding purity in food.

Women, compared to men are stricter in observing caste purity in food. They do not eat anything out when they go out of home. At the same time, men do not seem to follow such restrictions as do women. Women are very particular to have food prepared by themselves or of the same caste people. This retained the caste purity in the private realm that is within the family.

Three fold oppression of Dalit women

Dalit women are positioned at the bottom of India's caste, class and gender hierarchies. It is the outcome of severely imbalanced social, economic and political power equations. Violence against Dalit women presents clear evidence of widespread exploitation and they are subordinated in terms of power relations to men in a patriarchal society, as also against their communities based on caste. Dalit women are thrice discriminated against - treated as untouchables and outcastes due to their caste, face gender discrimination as women, and also economic impoverishment due to wage disparity. Caste, class and gender discrimination prevent Dalit women from enjoying their basic human rights, particularly to dignity, equality and development. Atrocities and violence against Dalit women are means of sustaining systemic discrimination and a means to preserve the existing caste and gender disparities.

The caste system declares Dalit women 'impure' and, therefore, untouchable, and hence socially excluded. This is a complete negation and violation of women's human rights. It was said that in the brahminical patriarchal system, Dalit women had greater space compared to dominant caste women. By 'greater freedom' they meant freedom of movement, interactions and work opportunities in the public sphere; but they do not necessarily enjoy freedom that is safe, secure, productive and progressive. This is due to limits and restrictions imposed on Dalit women's movement in the public spaces where men, and particularly dominant caste men, predominantly operate. These public spaces act for the dominant caste men as opportune places for exercising power and authority over Dalit women. Caste-wise, both forward castes and backward castes engage in violence against Dalit women, either as individuals or as a group. A study conducted by Women's forum shows that dominant caste men involve four forms of violence, namely physical assaults, verbal abuse, sexual harassment and sexual assaults, and rapes. This is particularly so where the Dalit woman is seen to transgress established caste norms, for example, defying untouchability. The punishment may befall on Dalit women in the form of gang rape or forced prostitution. Sometimes, the punishment takes on the form of collective punishment that is both expressive of caste outrage as well as instrumental in teaching the woman and her community a lesson of 'obedience' to caste norms. Violence against Dalit women is triggered by petty reasons, for example, trying to cross a dominant caste's fields, asserting equal rights to access water from common taps, or asserting the right to own economic resources.

Patriarchal caste system assumes that Dalit women are available for any form of exploitation and violence, as a result of their 'low' and 'impure' character of their caste that does not deserve honour and respect. The gender-caste-class axis, therefore, provides the base for violence against Dalit women. In view of their superior caste status, dominant caste men lay their hands on Dalit women's sexual or bodily integrity. They perceive that

they have a right over Dalit women's bodies and they would be grateful for the sexual attention they receive from higher caste men. Thus sexual violence is understood in caste ideology.

Economic exploitation plays a prominent role in Dalit women's oppression. Their landlessness combined with their dependence on dominant castes for work; wage and loans make their position vulnerable. Dalit hamlets are usually located at the end of the main village or on the village outskirts. The Dalits live in small huts, and even the few who may have slightly better housing are devoid of basic amenities such as sanitation, light and safe and clean drinking water. The women have to walk miles to collect not just water but also fuel and fodder for their domestic chores.

The women work on construction sites, carrying heavy loads of construction materials. They also work in brick kilns for long hours, as casual labourers, to lay roads with hot tar in the burning sun, without sandals or any other protective gear. Manual scavenging continues as an occupation in India and most of the manual scavengers is Dalit women. The women are forced to do this humiliating and degrading work, which further results in discrimination and social exclusion. They have no protection or benefits that labour laws should provide, since the majority of the women are in the unorganized sector. They do not even get the minimum wages that the state/country has specified, since they are unable to organize and demand decent wages. Dalit women undertake manual, low-paying, tedious, and time-consuming work.

Dalit women are facing violence from male members in the family. Dalit men assimilate the patriarchal norms prevalent in the society with its notions of women's honour, purity and obedience and become the causal factor for violence. Gender inequality and norms of female subordination formed a major category of causal factors for violence meted out by natal and marital family members to Dalit women.

Caste and Gender

Caste and gender are closely related and the sexuality of women is directly linked to the question of purity of race. The caste system and caste endogamy retained control over the labour and sexuality of women. Anuloma and pratiloma marriage by definition denigrate women. Caste not only determines social division of labour but also sexual division of labour. Ideologically concepts of caste purity of women to maintain patrilineal succession justified subordination of women. The prohibition of sacred thread ceremony for both women and sudhra, similar punishment for killing a woman and sudhra, denial of religious privileges are illustrations which indicate how caste and gender get entrenched. Feminist writings as 'Gendering Caste through a Feminist Lens (2006) illustrates how caste system upholds the patriarchal values and ideology which is used to justify the dominant, hegemonic, hierarchical and unequal patriarchal structures.

Therefore it is important to emphasize the substantive question of sub-ordination of certain sections of society and the structures that make their sub-ordination. For feminist scholars the issue is no longer whether the status of women was low or high but the specific nature and basis of their subordination in society. Hence the historical developments of patriarchies and how they have come to stay is important. Uma Chakravarti argues that the establishment of private property and the need to have caste purity required subordination of women and strict control over their mobility and sexuality. Female sexuality was channeled into legitimate motherhood within a controlled structure of reproduction to ensure patrilineal succession. According to her the mechanism of control operated through three different levels. The first device was when patriarchy was established as an ideology and women had internalized through *stridharma* or *pativartadharma* to live up to the ideal notion of womanhood constructed by the ideologues of the society. The second device was laws, customs and rituals prescribed by the brahmanical social code which reinforced the ideological control over women through the idealization of chastity and wife fidelity as highest duty of women. Like Gerda Lerner she believes that patriarchy has been a system of benevolent paternalism in which obedient women were accorded certain rights and privileges and security and this paternalism made the insubordination invisible and led to their complicity in it. The relationship between women purity and caste purity was important and central to brahmanical patriarchy and women were carefully guarded and lower caste men were prevented from having sexual access to women of higher caste. The third was the state itself which supported the patriarchal control over women and thus patriarchy could be established firmly not as an ideology but as an actuality. Therefore gender relations are organized within the structural frame work of family, religion, class, caste, community, tribe and state.

UNIT-III

WOMEN IN THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN INDIA-REALITIES

Women in the Revolt of 1857

Rani Lakshmibai.

Rani Lakshmibai (Manikarnika) was married to Raja Gangadhar Rao Newalkar, the Maharaja of Jhansi in 1842, and became the queen of Jhansi. After their marriage, she gave birth to a son Damodar Rao in 1851. However, the child died when he was about four months old. After the death of their son, the Raja and Rani of Jhansi adopted Anand Rao, the son of Gangadhar Rao's cousin. However, it is said that the Raja of Jhansi never recovered from his son's death, and he died in 1853. Since Anand Rao was adopted, Lord Dalhousie annexed Jhansi, saying that the throne had "lapsed" and claimed the right to put Jhansi under his protection. In March 1854, she was given a pension of 60,000 rupees and ordered to leave the palace and the Jhansi fort. But she fought fiercely against the British troop which tried to siege Jhansi on 23 March 1858. Lakshmi Bai's forces could not hold out and three days later the British were able to breach the city walls and capture the city. Lakshmi Bai escaped by jumping from the wall at night with her son and joined other rebel forces, including those of Tatya Tope. The Rani and Tatya Tope moved on to Gwalior, where the combined rebel forces defeated the army of the Maharaja of Gwalior when the armies deserted the rebel forces. They then occupied a strategic fort at Gwalior. However, on the 17th of June 1858, while battling against British near the Phool Bagh area of Gwalior, she died.

Rani Avantibai (1831-1858)

Rani Avantibai was born in 1831. When Vikramaditya Singh, the ruler of Ramgarh State died leaving behind his wife Avantibai and no heir to the throne, the British put the state under court administration. Avantibai vowed to win back her land from the British. She raised an army of four thousand men and led it herself against the British in 1857. A fierce battle ensued and Avantibai fought most valiantly but could not hold out for long against the superior strength of the British army. When her defeat became imminent she killed herself with her own sword and English army couldn't defeat her in her life.

Begum Hazrat Mahal.

The wife of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah of Awadh, who had been deposed by the English in 1856, played a memorable part in raising the banner of rebellion in Awadh. She ruled on behalf of her 11 year old son Birjis Qadar with great wisdom and reorganized the

machinery of administration. She directed the attack on the Residency at Lucknow. After the fall of Lucknow, she joined Maulvi Ahmadullah at Shajahanpur, but was defeated and escaped to Nepal. She refused to accept the pension offered to her by British and chose to die unmourned in Nepal.

Santhal, Bhil and Munda women in anti-British struggle

Tribal women along with their men participated in the anti-British struggle. Tribal movements against the British were not the outcome of nationalism unlike the nontribal. A series of intermittent tribal movements disturbed the British administration. The most powerful of these tribal movements were led by the Santhals, Bhils and Mundas.

Tribes had kept their culture intact in spite of their contact with the mainstream culture. But the mistaken land revenue policy of the British sowed the seeds of discontent among the tribes. Traditionally land in their area belongs to the tribes. It was owned communally by the entire tribal population. There was no question of proprietorship of land among the tribes. They did shifting cultivation and followed their own method of agriculture undisturbed by the outsiders. Forest was also used by the tribes for their livelihood without disturbing the ecological balance of the forests. This isolated existence of the tribes continued till the British set their eyes on the tribal wealth.

The British land revenue system introduced zamindars on the tribal land. These non-tribal outsiders who are moneylenders and landlords generally called as dikus steadily alienated tribal land. These dikus imposed land rent hitherto unknown to the tribes. Under the British, sporadic attempts were made to resist the entry of dikus and protect the land. In the case of Santhals, as early as 1872, they passed a regulation forbidding any nontribal from owning tribal land. This was not implemented properly. For the implementation of this Act, the Santhals need land ownership papers which they can show when govt. settlements are made. But the Santhals do not understand the importance of such papers. They have never had papers, and their laws are unwritten codes administered by the panchayats. The only people who could make use of such laws were the dikus, who know where to get papers and when to present them. Innocent tribal women were molested by the outsiders. When the tribes put up resistance against exploitation, tribal women were in the forefront of struggle against the Dikus and the British.

British attitude towards women fighters

The British dealt women who participated in the anti colonial struggle with a stern hand. They were also beaten up like men in the processions. Many women were imprisoned. Many were succumbed to the injuries. Though the British claimed themselves the last bastion of hapless Indian women, they suppressed them ruthlessly when they involved in the anti-British struggle.

Eminent followers of Mahatma Gandhi

Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949)

Born in Hyderabad, she was the eldest of the eight children of Aghorenath Chattopadhyay and Baradasundari. She passed her matriculation at the age of 12 standing first in the whole of Madras Presidency. She did her higher studies in London. She was a poet of merit and her poems received rave reviews in the English press. She came to be regarded as the Nightingale of India. She married Dr. M. Govindarajulu Naidu, Chief Medical Officer to the Nizam of Hyderabad.

Sarojini Naidu was in the forefront of the National Movement. She came under the influence of Gopalakrishna Gokhale and Gandhi. Gokhale advised her to spare all her energy and talents for nation's cause. She gave up writing poetry and fully devoted herself to emancipation of women, education, Hindu-Muslim unity etc. She became a follower of Gandhiji and accompanied him to England. Whenever in England, she openly criticized British rule in India which caught the attention of scholars and intellectuals. The period from 1917 to 1919 was the most dynamic phase of Sarojini's career. During this time, she campaigned for the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms, the Khilafat issue, the draconian Rowlett Act and the Satyagraha. When Gandhi launched the Civil Disobedience Movement, she proved a faithful lieutenant. With great courage she quelled the rioters, sold proscribed literature, and addressed frenzied meetings on the carnage at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar. In 1930 when Mahatma Gandhi chose her to lead the Salt Satyagraha the stories of her courage became legion. After Gandhi's arrest she had prepared 2,000 volunteers under the scorching sun to raid the Dahrsana Salt Works, while the police faced them half a mile up the road with rifle, lathis (canes) and steel tipped clubs. The volunteers wildly cheered when she shook off the arm of the British police officer who came to arrest her and marched proudly to the barbed wire stockade where she was interned before being imprisoned.

She went on to become the first woman President of the Indian National Congress in 1925 held at Kanpur. Her presence was a signal for hundreds of other women to join, and eventually the salt protest was made successful by the many women who not only made salt, but also sat openly in marketplaces selling, and indeed, buying it. She went to jail several times. After Independence she became the Governor of UP and she died in office on 1949.

Kasturba Gandhi

Kasturba Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi's wife joined her husband while he was in South Africa and worked with him for many years there. She was a leader of Women's Satyagraha for which she was imprisoned. She helped her husband in the cause of Indigo

workers in Champaran, Bihar and the No Tax Campaign in Kaira, Gujarat. She was arrested twice for picketing liquor and foreign cloth shops, and in 1939 for participating in the Rajkot Satyagraha.

Born to Gokuladas Makharji of Porbandar, Kasturba married Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi) through arrangement. They were both 13 years old. At that time, she was illiterate, and so Gandhi taught her to read and write – a potentially radical move, given the position of women in India at that time.

When Gandhi left to study in London in 1888, she remained in India to raise their newborn son Harilal. She had three more sons - Manilal (1892), Ramdas (1897), and Devdas (1900). In 1906, Mohandas Gandhi decided to practice brahmacharya, and the couple became celibate. Although she stood by her husband, she did not always easily accept his ideas. Gandhi had to work hard to persuade her to see (and agree to) his points of view. Kasturba was deeply religious. Like her husband, she renounced all caste distinctions and lived in ashrams.

Kasturba often joined her husband in political protests. She traveled to South Africa in 1897 to be with her husband. From 1904 to 1914, she was active in the Phoenix Settlement near Durban. During the 1913 protest against working conditions for Indians in South Africa, Kasturba was arrested and sentenced to three months in a hard labor prison. Later, in India, she sometimes took her husband's place when he was under arrest. In 1915, when Gandhi returned to India to support indigo planters, Kasturba accompanied him. She taught hygiene, discipline, reading and writing to women and children.

Kasturba suffered from chronic bronchitis. Stress from the Quit India Movement's arrests and ashram life caused her to fall ill. After contracting pneumonia, she died from a severe heart attack on February 22, 1944. She died in Mahatma Gandhi's arms while both were still in prison.

Kamala Nehru (1899–1936)

Kamala Nehru organized processions, addressed meetings and led picketing of liquor and foreign cloth shops at Allahabad. She played a prominent part in organizing the No Tax Campaign in United Provinces. She was the wife of Jawaharlal Nehru, leader of the Indian National Congress and first Prime Minister of India. .

It is said that she felt alienated amongst the more Westernized Nehrus. It was only with the involvement of the Nehru in the national movement, that she emerged into the forefront. In the Non Cooperation movement of 1921, she organized groups of women in Allahabad and picketed shops selling foreign cloth and liquor. When her husband was

arrested to prevent him delivering a "seditious" public speech, she went in his place to read it out. She was twice arrested by British authorities.

In 1917, she gave birth to a daughter, Indira Priyadarshini, who later succeeded her father as prime minister and head of the Congress party. Kamala died from tuberculosis in Switzerland while her husband was in prison. She spent some time at Gandhi's ashram with Kasturba Gandhi where she built a close friendship with Prabhavati Devi wife of Jayaprakash Narayan.

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit (1900-1990)

Vijaya Lakshmi Nehru Pandit (1900 - 1990) was an Indian diplomat and politician, in 1921 she married Ranjit Sitaram Pandit, who died on January 14, 1944. She was the first Indian woman to hold a cabinet post. In 1937 she was elected to the provincial legislature of the United Provinces and was designated minister of local self-government and public health. She held the latter post until 1939 and again from 1946 to 1947. In 1946 she was elected to the Constituent Assembly from the United Provinces.

She was the first woman in India to hold a ministerial rank. She was imprisoned thrice for taking part in the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1932, 1941 and 1942. After Independence, she continued to serve the country. She was the first woman to become president of the United Nations General Assembly.

Jawaharlal Nehru's sister, Vijayalakshmi Pandit inspired by Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi and impressed by Sarojini Naidu entered the Non Cooperation Movement. She was arrested in 1932 and sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment. She was arrested in 1940, and yet again during the Quit India Movement. She attended the Pacific Relations Conference at Hot Springs, U.S.A. as leader of the Indian delegation sponsored by the Indian Council of World Affairs. She was present in San Francisco when the U.N first met there, and through numerous well attended public lectures she challenged the British dominated delegates' rights to represent India therein.

Following India's independence from the British in 1947 she entered the diplomatic service and became India's ambassador to several countries: the Soviet Union from 1947 to 1949, the United States and Mexico from 1949 to 1951, Ireland from 1955 to 1961 (during which time she was also the Indian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom), and Spain from 1958 to 1961. Between 1946 and 1968 she also headed the Indian delegation to the United Nations. In 1953, she became the first woman President of the United Nations General Assembly

In India, she served as governor of Maharashtra from 1962 to 1964, after which she was elected to the Indian Lok Sabha from Phulpur, her brother's former constituency. She held office from 1964 to 1968. Pandit was a harsh critic of her niece, Indira Gandhi, after

Gandhi became Prime Minister in 1966, and she retired from active politics after relations between them soured. On retiring she moved to Dehradun in the Doon Valley in the Himalayan foothills.

In 1979 she was appointed the Indian representative to the UN Human Rights Commission, after which she retired from public life. Her writings include *The Evolution of India* (1958) and *The Scope of Happiness: A Personal Memoir* (1979). Her daughter Nayantara Sahgal, who later settled in her mother's house in Dehradun, is a well-known novelist.

Sucheta Kripalani

The contribution of Sucheta Kripalani in the struggle for freedom is also worthy of note. She courted imprisonment for taking part in freedom struggle. She was elected as a member of Constituent Assembly in 1946. She was general secretary of Indian National Congress from 1958 to 1960, and Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh from 1963 to 1967. Sucheta Kripalani was in the words of Shrimati Indira Gandhi, "a person of rare courage and character who brought credit to Indian womanhood." She was born in Ambala, Haryana to a Bengali family. Her father, S.N. Majumdar though a government doctor was a nationalist. Educated at Indraprastha College and St. Stephen's College, Delhi she became a lecturer at the Banaras Hindu University. In 1936, she married socialist, Acharya Kriplani and became involved with the Indian National Congress.

Like her contemporaries Aruna Asaf Ali and Usha Mehta, she came to the forefront during the Quit India Movement. She later worked closely with Mahatma Gandhi during the Partition riots. She accompanied him to Noakhali in 1946. She was one of the few women who were elected to the Constituent Assembly and was part of the subcommittee that drafted the Indian Constitution. She became a part of the subcommittee that was handed over the task of laying down the charter for the constitution of India. On 15th August, 1947 she sang Vande Mataram in the Independence Session of the Constituent Assembly.

After independence she remained involved with politics in U.P. She was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1952 and 1957 and served as a Minister of State for Small Scale Industries. In 1962, she was elected to the U.P Assembly from Kanpur and served in the Cabinet in 1962. In 1963, she became the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, the first woman to hold that position in any Indian state. The highlight of her tenure was the firm handling of a state employees strike. The first-ever strike by the state employees which continued for 62 days took place during her regime. She relented only when the employees' leaders agreed for compromise. Although the wife of a socialist, Kriplani cemented her reputation as a firm administrator by refusing their demand for pay hikes.

She retired from politics in 1971 and remained in seclusion till her death in 1974. She was a very active member. She became the first woman to be elected Chief Minister of a state.

Sister Nivedita(1867-1911)

Sister Nivedita was one among the host of foreign women who were attracted towards Swami Vivekananda and Hindu philosophy. Born in Ireland on 28 October 1867, she arrived in India in January, 1898, in search of truth. She was impressed by the ideals of Womanhood in India. She once remarked that India was the land of great women. She, however, felt that Indian women needed, to cultivate among themselves a wider and broader concept of the nation, so that they could participate along with men in building a free and strong nation. She propagated for the cause of India throughout America and Europe. Swami Vivekananda described her as a real Lioness. Rabindranath Tagore regarded her as Lok-Mata and Aurobindo Ghosh as Agni-sikha. Margaret Elizabeth Noble (1867-1911), better known as Sister Nivedita, was an Anglo-Irish social worker, author, teacher and disciple of Swami Vivekananda. She met Vivekananda in 1895 in London and travelled to India (Kolkata) in 1898. Swami Vivekananda gave her the name Nivedita (which means one who is dedicated to God) on March 25, 1898. In November 1898 she started a school for girls which are now called Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Sister Nivedita Girls' High School. She worked to improve the lives of Indian women of all castes.

Annie Besant (1847-1933)

An Irish lady, she came to India in 1893 and became the leader of the Theosophical Society. She lived at Adayar in Madras which was the headquarters of Theosophical society. She supported the Sanatan Dharma movement advocating that Hindu children be taught Sanskrit and learn 'Aryan simplicity and spirituality, but despite this revivalist strain she believed in the equal rights of men and women on the equal but complimentary basis. Initially she felt that India needed to educate herself before she was capable of self government, but by the outbreak of the First World War she was campaigning for self govt. In 1902 while in London she criticized England for the conditions prevalent in India.

In 1914 she joined the Indian National Congress and gave it a new direction. The idea of the Home Rule League was first discussed by her. Her appreciation of the strength of women was similar to that of Gandhi. In her opinion, the Home Rule was rendered tenfold greater by the adhesion to it of large numbers of women who bring to its help the calculating heroism, endurance and self sacrifice of feminine nature. But politically she opposed Gandhi stigmatizing the non-cooperation movement as a programme of revolt which must land the country in ruin if successful and almost surely in riot and bloodshed if it fails. Her opposition made her unpopular, even within the Home Rule League, so that

in 1919 she founded the National Home Rule League. In 1924 she led a deputation of home rulers to England to demand Dominion Home Rule for India, and in 1925 she together with H.S.Gauri, Shiv Rao and C.P.Ramasway Aiyer drafted a Bill on a constitution for self govt. which was approved by Gandhi and supported by the Labour Party but never enacted.

She with the radical congress leader Tilak, Margaret Cousins and Sarojini Naidu presented a memorial to Montagu on December 18, 1917 which gave equal rights to women in the matters of political franchise. She was the first woman president of the Congress and gave a powerful lead to women's movement in India. In 1917 she was arrested under the Defense of India Act. Her arrest was followed a series of protest meetings all over the country and abroad. President Woodrow Wilson interceded with the British for her release.

Annie Besant was born in London into a middle-class family of Irish origin. She was always proud of being Irish and supported the cause of Irish self-rule throughout her adult life. Her father died when she was five years old, leaving the family almost penniless. She was given a strong sense of duty to society and an equally strong sense of what independent women could achieve. As a young woman, she was also able to travel widely in Europe. In 1867, at age nineteen she married 26-year-old clergyman Frank Besant.

Women in Revolutionary movement

A new kind of women's participation was developing in 1920s with their involvement in direct action. So far they stood in the periphery and with their entry in revolutionary movement. They formed themselves as the core. The centre of women's revolutionary movement was Chittagong in Bengal where a group of revolutionaries had formed. The Chittgong Armoury raid fired the imaginations of women revolutionaries too. Sumit Sarkar opines the impact of the Raid on women thus- 'Recruits poured into the various groups in a steady stream, and the romantic appeal of the raid attracted into the fold of the terrorist party women and young girls who from this onwards are found assisting the terrorists as housekeepers, messengers, custodians of arms and sometimes as comrades.' Raid resulted in the death of many revolutionaries and the group decided to take revenge by killing the Commissioner of Police. Anuja Sen was one of the ladies instructed to bomb his car. She died on the spot as the bomb exploded when she hurled it. Another woman was one of three revolutionaries arrested at a place Sarishbari with explosive materials which they were taking from Calcutta to Mymensingh. In spite of the stern actions from the British govt. terrorist activities continued and increasing numbers of girls joined revolutionary groups or engaged in direct action on their own.

In 1931, two girls, Shanti Ghosh and Suniti Chaudhary shot the district magistrate, Mr. Stevens, who was one of the magistrates who had taken advantage of the govt. promulgations to harass women. It is said that many girls in the hill tracts of Bengal were exploited by the British officials by misusing their authority. Shanti Ghosh and Suniti Chaudhary decided to pay back the brutality in its own coin. They walked upto him in his office and shot him dead. Ela Sen writes that they preserved a calm and courageous attitude under trail. Their courage did not desert them even when they were transported for life. The whole world was shocked by this 'revolting' incident, by what was called the 'shameless' conduct of these girls, but none knew what was behind. Even when a member said of another at the assembly: 'Let him go and ask the brave girls of Bengal why they have committed theses deeds', it was slurred over and non proper investigations were made'. They were sentenced to transportation for life.

Bina Das was also sentenced for life transportation for attempting to shoot the Governor of Bengal, sir Stanley Jackson in 1922. She was a member of a women students' society, the chhatri Sangh. Her sister, Kalyani was the secretary of Chhatri Sangh. Kamala Das was another revolutionary who moved into a hostel to do revolutionary activity. The hostel was run by Bina and Kalyani Das's mother. It was a centre of women's revolutionary activity. Kamala kept bombs in the store room of the hostel.

Bina Das confided her intension to shoot the governor to herself as she wants that no one else would have to take responsibility for her action. Kamala Das helped Bina Das to procure the gun and also taught to use the gun. On the 6th February, 1932, 'While the governor of Bengal Sir Stanley Jackson was addressing the convocation of Calcutta University, Bina Das rose from her seat, walked up the aisle and when a short distance from the Governor , took a pistol from her robes and fired three times. The shots went wide, before she could take another aim, she was overpowered. When the attempt failed and Bina Das was arrested she did not reveal the names of her accomplice. She was sentenced to nine years rigorous imprisonment. Kamala Das was herself arrested and jailed for six years.

Preetilata Wadedar was another revolutionary. She joined nationalist groups at college and learnt how to wield lathis and swords. She had been inspired by Bankimchandra and Saratchandra in her adolescence, reading their novels, and resolved to give their lives for the country. She was particular to lead Indian way of life and used swadesi goods only. Her name associated with a raid on the Pahaartalii Club, which Europeans frequented; the raiders threw a bomb into the main hall of the club, one person was shot and four were wounded. Most of the raiders escaped, but Preetilata Wadedar found dead outside, clothed in male attire. She had taken cyanide rather than be arrested. A statement was recovered from her person stating that the raid was an act of war. Kalpana Dutta said: ...Plenty of men had mounted the gallows, had been killed in action in the struggle of the terrorist revolutionaries. But Preeti was the first woman known to have been in action and to have died in action... She was the only child of her parents.

From Preeti's actions, people were convinced for the first time that Indian women can do what our men have done. They can give their lives for their country as easily as men can. Whatever criticism there may be of the methods of the terrorists, all Chittagong remembers Preeti as their brave daughter.

Swarnakumari Debi (1856-1932)

She was a social reformer from Bengal associated with the activities of Brahmo Samaj and Theosophical Society. She was the fourth daughter of Debendranath Tagore. She was married at the age of thirteen according to Brahmo rites. Published her first novel *Deep Nirman* at the age of eighteen and has 25 books in Bengali language to her credit. Her writings include short stories, novels and plays. *Chinnamukal* and *Phular Mala*, novels written by her, were translated into English. She also worked as the chief editor of *Bharatia*, a monthly journal.

She founded the Ladies Theosophical Society in 1882. Sakhi Samiti was another organization for women started in 1886. It provided women of respectable families the opportunity to mix each other for the cause of social welfare. It took great care in educating the orphans and widows. The women who received education from the Samitie were engaged in educating the illiterate women. These lady teachers who received training under the Sakhi Samiti were given remuneration for their work. They served two purposes - 1.promoting female education and 2.self reliance. The samiti conducted annual fairs of handicrafts made by women to collect fund for female education. Swarnakumari Debi represented Bengal in the Congress Session held in 1890. Her daughter Saraladebi Goshal later Saraladebi Chaudharani continued the work initiated by Swarnakumari Debi.

Saraladebi chaudharani (1872-1946)

She was the daughter of Swarnakumari Debi and was a devote nationalist. She worked as the editor of *Bharati*, the monthly journal. She espoused the young men to form an intimate circle for the defense of women in public places. Encouraged both men and women to work for India's independence and ever ready to sacrifice their life for the cause of the nation. She wanted to prove that Bengalis were not a race of cowards opined by Lord Macaulay.

She organized Pratapaditya bratas which gave training in defensive exercises with swords and clubs as well as in boxing and wrestling. The Birastami Bratas used to conduct parade of physical prowess on the second day of Duga Puja. It was celebrated with fanfare in 1904 under her auspices. Competitions and rallies were held as part of the celebrations. She also started an academy of martial arts in Calcutta.

The group trained by Chaudhurani sung the Bande Mataram in the Congress Session held at Calcutta. The Mymensingh Suhrid Samiti used the word Bande Mataram as a national call in 1905. She started Bharat Stree Mandal at Lahore in 1910 and female education was the primary goal of the Mandal. She also proposed to start Stree Mandal in every province for the eradication of illiteracy among women. Lady teachers were sent to the houses of those who had expressed their wish to educate their wives and daughters.

Kalpana Datta (1913-1995)

Kalpana Joshi (Datta) a revolutionary was born at Sripur of Chittagong district on 27 July 1913 in a middle-class family. Having matriculated in 1929 from Chittagong, Kalpana Datta went to Calcutta and joined the Bethune College. Greatly influenced by the examples set by the revolutionaries Kshatriya Basu and Kanailal Datta, she soon joined the Chhatri Sangha. Purnendu Dastidar drew her into the revolutionary circle of Mastarda Surya sen.

The Chittagong Armory Raid took place on 18 April 1930 and Kalpana hurried back to Chittagong and came in contact with Surya Sen in May 1931. In the meantime, many of the leaders of the Raid like Ananta Singh, Ganesh Ghosh and Loknath Bal had been arrested and were awaiting trial.

Kalpana was entrusted with the safe carrying of heavy explosive materials from Calcutta. She also secretly prepared 'gun-cotton' and planned to plant a dynamite fuse under the court building and inside the jail to free the revolutionary leaders, who were being tried in a special Tribunal.

The plot was uncovered and certain restrictions were imposed on Kalpana's movements. She, however, managed to visit regularly the village of Surya Sen, sometimes even at dead of night. She also used to have regular training in revolver shooting, along with her comrade pritilata waddedar.

In September 1931 Surya Sen decided to entrust Kalpana and Preetilata with a plan to attack the European Club at Chittagong. A week before the action Kalpana was arrested while moving out for a survey work in a boy's attire. While in jail, she was told about the Pahartali action and the heroic suicide of Preetilata. Being released on bail, she went underground at the bidding of Surya Sen and in the early hours of 17 February 1933 the police encircled their hideout. Surya Sen was captured while Kalpana, along with Manindra Datta, escaped.

On 19 May 1933 Kalpana, with some comrades, was arrested. In the second supplementary trial of Chittagong Armory Raid case, Surya Sen and Tarakeswar Dastidar were sentenced to death, and Kalpana was sentenced to transportation for life. Being released in 1939 she graduated from the Calcutta University in 1940. Soon she joined the

CPI and resumed her battle against the British rule. She turned Kalpana Joshi in 1943 when she married PC Joshi, the leader of the CPI. She went back to Chittagong and organised the Kisans' and women's fronts of the party. In 1946 she contested, though unsuccessfully, in the elections to the Bengal Legislative Assembly. After 1947 she migrated to India and resigned from active politics. Kalpana Datta breathed her last at New Delhi on 8 February 1995.

Matangini Hazra (1869-1942)

Matangini Hazra was an Indian revolutionary who participated in the Indian independence movement until she was shot dead by the British Indian police in front of the Tamluk Police Station (of erstwhile Midnapore District) on September 29, 1942. She was affectionately known as Gandhi buri, Bangla for old lady Gandhi.

Matangini Hazra, who was 73 years at the time, led a procession of six thousand supporters, mostly women volunteers, with the purpose of taking over the Tamluk police station. When the procession reached the outskirts of the town, they were ordered to disband under Section 144 of the Indian Penal Code by the Crown police. As she stepped forward, Matangini Hazra was shot once. Apparently, she had stepped forward and was appealing to the police not to shoot at the crowd.

The Biplabi newspaper of the parallel Tamluk National Government commented:

“Matangini led one procession from the north of the criminal court building; even after the firing commenced, she continued to advance with the tri-colour flag, leaving all the volunteers behind. The police shot her three times. She continued marching despite wounds to the forehead and both hands.”

As she was repeatedly shot, she kept chanting Vande Mataram, translating as “hail to the Motherland”. She died with the flag of the Indian National Congress held high and still flying.

Women Regiment of INA

Women Regiment of INA is known as the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. It is led by Capt Lakshmi Swaminathan, the unit was raised in July 1943 with volunteers from the expatriate Indian population in South East Asia.

The recruits were divided into sections and platoons and were accorded ranks of Non-Commissioned Officers and Sepoys according to their educational qualifications. These cadets underwent military and combat training with drills, route marches as well as weapons training in rifles, hand grenades, and bayonet charges. Later, a number of the cadets were chosen for more advanced training in jungle warfare in Burma. The first

qualified troops, numbering nearly five hundred, passed out of the Singapore training camp in March 1944. Some 200 of the cadets were also chosen for nursing training, forming the Chand Bibi Nursing Corps.

During the INA's Imphal campaign, an initial contingent of nearly a hundred of the Rani of Jhansi troops moved to Maymya, part of which was intended to form a vanguard unit to enter the Gangetic plains of Bengal after the expected fall of Imphal. A part of the unit also formed the Nursing Corps at the INA hospital at Maymyo. Following the failure of the siege of Imphal and the INA's disastrous retreat, the Rani troops were tasked with coordinating the relief and care of the INA troops who arrived at Monywa and to Maymyo and were not used in combat.

After the fall of Rangoon and the withdrawal of the Azad Hind government and Subhas Chandra Bose from the city and through Burma, the troops originally from Burma were allowed to disband, while the remainder of the regiment retreated along with the retreating Japanese forces on foot and, when available, on mechanized transport. During the retreat it suffered some attacks both from Allied air attacks, as well as the Burmese resistance force. The total number of casualties suffered is not known. The unit later disbanded.

Lakshmi Sehgal (1914-2012)

She was in charge of the INA women's wing. Lakshmi Sehgal was a physician who commanded the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, the women's wing of the Indian National Army (INA), which sided with Germany and Japan against the British during World War II.

She was born to Ammu Swaminathan a social worker and independence activist in Madras on October 24, 1914. Her father, Dr. S. Swaminathan was a lawyer. Lakshmi studied medicine at Madras Medical College and in 1940 left for Singapore where she practiced as a physician for some time. She tended the Indian prisoners of war when Singapore fell to the Japanese army.

She met the nationalist revolutionary leader Subhas Chandra Bose and he requested her to set up a women's regiment to be called the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, named after the heroine of the Revolt of 1857. Most of the recruits were teenage volunteers of Indian descent from Malayan rubber estates; very few had ever been to India. They underwent standard military and combat training and some had more advanced training in jungle warfare. The cadets were given ranks of non-commissioned officers or privates according to their education. Later, camps were established in Rangoon and Bangkok. The first 500 women passed out of the Singapore training camp in March 1944.

On 21st October, 1943, when the Provisional Government of Azad Hind was announced, Lakshmi was the sole woman member of its Cabinet. The Rani of Jhansi Regiment saw active duty on the front. Lakshmi who was given the rank of Colonel, although in the popular imagination she remained 'Captain Lakshmi' was active both militarily and on the medical front. She played a heroic role not only in the fighting but during the terrible days that INA personnel were hunted by the victorious British troops and saved many lives because of her courage and devotion. She was finally captured and brought to India on 4th March, 1946 when she received a heroine's welcome. The British authorities realised that keeping her a prisoner would be counter-productive and she was released.

In 1947, she married Colonel Prem Kumar Sehgal, a fellow INA fighter, and settled in Kanpur, where she returned to her medical practice. She tended refugees from partition from Pakistan and in the Bangladesh crisis of 1971 she organized refugee camps.

Capt. Lakshmi's parents belonged to Kerala. Her brother Govind Swaminathan was an eminent lawyer and one of the leading members of the Chennai Bar, and her sister Mrinalini Sarabhai, wife of the nuclear scientist Vikram Sarabhai, is a famous dancer.

Women Question in the Social Reform Movements in Kerala

Socio-religious reform movements of 19th century India had left its impact on the tradition bound 19th century Kerala society too. One of the clarion calls of the reform movement was the emancipation of women. The British administration brought missionaries to Kerala as elsewhere with the Colonial rule. Though their primary aim was the propagation of their religion they did charity work and started schools for giving education to women. They succeeded in converting the low caste people to their religion. Also they could instill in them awareness about their rights. As a result, the converted Channar women agitated for their rights, the agitation developed into a movement which is generally known as *Channar Lahala*. Channar women were not allowed to wear cloths above the loins. The converted Channar women's struggle was for getting that right recognized. In 1829, the riot started throughout South Travancore when the converted Channar women started wearing dresses above the loins. This provoked the caste Hindus. Though government suppressed it, finally Colonel Monro granted Channar women the right to use jacket but not the separate upper cloth.

Demands came from both Hindu and the Christian Channar women for rights to wear separate upper cloth. They submitted various memoranda without result. Therefore they started wearing the upper cloth without the permission of the govt. Again riots broke out in 1859. Channar homes were destroyed. In July 1859, the govt. granted Channar women the right to wear upper cloth with the strict direction that it must not be in the style of high caste women. Hindu Channar women were also given the right to wear jackets. In Kayamkulam when an Ezhava woman walked along the public road by wearing the upper cloth, caste Hindus and some Muslims insulted and harassed her. This

incest also led to riots. The courage showed by the women of Channar and Ezhava communities to fight against discrimination and for their rights was immense. Channar Rebellion was a remarkable example of women's awakening in Kerala.

The last quarter of 19th century witnessed a new spurt of social awakening. Starting of printing presses and publishing of newspapers and journal contributed to the new awakening in the society. Various customs and practices including superstitions existing in the society were widely discussed by these newspapers and journals.

Rudiments of feminism can be seen in the novel, *Indulekha*, written by O.Chandumenon in 1889.. Chandu Menon through his novel ridiculed the prevailing practices in the society and presented a new image of an educated girl with intelligence and courage to decide her future and to choose her life partner according to her wishes which was really unthinkable in those days. In 1887 a women's magazine *Keraliya Suguna Bodini* was started. It was the first women magazine in Malayalam.

Sreemathi the first women's magazine weekly in Malayalam was published by Anna Chandy from Trivandrum. Along with stories and articles about home management, general health, household industries, it widely discussed women's freedom, their rights and question of widow marriage.

The reform activities initially came from men as they were the people who enjoyed freedom. Influenced by western education and modern ideals, they felt the need to reform their community especially the women folk. In the first state, women's participation in the movement was minimal as they were kept under strict rules and regulations. Only Nair women had the freedom of expression and the freedom to come out of their homes.

The major force behind women's emancipation was education. They started modern education for girls in Kerala. At first there was a lot of prejudice against women education. This became a great obstacle to their education. Christian missionaries started the first girls' school in 1819 in Nagercoil. After that many schools were opened by missionaries in different parts of Kerala. But due to social opposition, the attendance was minimal. Church Mission society was mainly responsible for the education of girls in central Kerala. The missionaries imparted free education in Malabar and Cochin also. These missionaries lit the fire of education and paved the base of modern education in Kerala. The progress in education especially of women contributed much to the social reform movement of the time. This influenced the govt. also to think about starting girls' schools and in 1864 Travancore govt. started the first govt. school. Though less in number the educated women became aware of their condition in society and urged for a change. Educated women were soon absorbed as teachers in schools as there were few women to teach in girls' schools. Education modernized and reshaped the life of women.

The reform movements in each community and caste led to the formation of organizations such as Sree Narayan Dharma Pariplan Sangam, Yogakshmea Sabha and Nair Service Society which in turn acted as a medium to struggle for their rights and to work for economic prosperity and social reforms. The guru urged his community men to do away with the expensive and superstitious customs like Tahlikettu *kalyanam* , *thirandukul*, *pulikude*. He advocated women's education and asked his people to work for the same.

Nambuthiries who occupied the highest position in the social ladder had been suffering from many disabilities. However till the last part of the 19th century they remained indifferent to modern education and the changes occurring all over the state. Their women spent their time in the gloomy interior of their residence, behind purdah. The first instance of perhaps of the education of a Nambuthiri girl on modern lines was when Karimanthur Parameswaran Nambuthiripad in North Malabar sent his daughter in 1911 to an elementary school.

In 1908, the Yogakshema Saba was formed with the objective of reforming the Nambuthiri community. Kuroor Unni Namboothrippad and Chittoor Narayana Nambuthipad were the early organizers of the group. They focused to improve the plight of Nambuthiri women.

Meanwhile a Nambuthiri Yuvajana Sangham or 'Youth League' came to be formed a radical organization under the leadership of V.T.Bhattathirippad and K.N.Kuttan Nambuthiripaad. They published a monthly Unni Nambuthiri, to disseminate progressive ideas of reform among the members of the community. Tremendous changes occurred among the community after formation of the Youth league. The great revolutionary who took up the cause of Nambuthiri women and devoted much of his time for that was. V.T. He was the person who laid the foundation for the reform activity among women.

V.T. wrote a play Atukalyilninu Arangathekke(From kitchen to the arena), which portrayed the inhuman customs existed in Nambuthiri illams and pathetic condition of Nambuthiri women. The staging of the drama was opposed greatly by the conservatives. But against all obstacles, the drama was staged during the twenty second yearly conference of Yogakshma sabha at Edakkuni. Later, in many places which include illams the drama was staged and women also got an opportunity to see and enjoy the play which made an effect on the community.

Another literary work which promoted reforms was the novel Apphante makal written by M.Bhavathran Nambouthiripad. (Father's daughter). The works Iruthumatic (the fertile female) by M.P Bhattthripad, and Marakudakkulilay Mahanaragam (the inferno behind parasol) by M.R. Bhattathriripaad were also aimed at the reformation of Nambuthiri women. The drama Marakudakullulay mahanaragam was staged in the year 1930. These works advocated English education for Nambuthiri girls and boys and

fought against polygamy, the marriage of young girls to old Nambuthiri women, the practice of younger sons marrying girls of lower communities and the system of excommunication.

The first ever widow marriage was conducted in 1939 under V.T. 's initiative, with his blessings and also due to his efforts. The woman who came out with courage was Nangema, V.T's wife's sister. The bridegroom was M.R.Bhattathiripad. Though it roused much protest from the caste people, it triggered off a revolution which was to happen in Nambuthiri community.

Meanwhile the members of the Yuvajana Sanga removed the sacred thread from their bodies, condemned polygamy in which the leaders indulged and advocated the marriage of widows. Under the auspices of Nambuthiri yuvajana sangam a marriage sub committee was formed to help the unmarried Nambuthiri youngsters to marry from the same caste.

Gradually women also came forward to be active participants in the reform movements. The reformist Nambuthiri women began wearing blouses instead of the ghosha, the first who rejected ghosha and came out Mrs. Manezhi. She attended a meeting to yogkshemasbha at Edakunni in 1922 without wearing ghosha. Though only one woman attended the twenty second meeting of the sabha, 75 women who rejected ghosha in its silver jubilee celebration. After Manezhi, many women rejected ghosha. They are Parvati Nenmenimanagalam and Arya Pallam. Parvathi presided over the meeting of Yuvajan sangam held at thaliparamb. She later represented Nambuthiri women at the time of discussion of Nambuthiri bill of Cochin.

Though women of Nair community enjoyed comparatively greater freedom, they did not attend public meetings and discussions. A change came about through the efforts of Mannath Padmanabhan and annual conferences conducted throughout the state every year. The first annual conference of NSS was held at karuvatta in 1929. The most notable event of this conference was an exclusive session for women presided by Thottakkatu Madhavi Amma.

Freedom Movement and Kerala women

Accamma Cherian is one of the iron ladies of Kerala. She studied well and joined in a middle school, as teacher. Her hard work promoted her as a headmistress, in which school she worked as teacher. At one stage, activities of Portuguese and British became malicious. They crossed their boundary levels and started to torture the people without pity. This event created fire inside her. Immediately, she resigned her job and participated in freedom struggle events. On 1938, National congress party was banned in Kerala. To convey the opposition for this act, she collected the people and directed a rally from Thampanoor to the Kowdiar Palace of Kerala. British government announced the firing order for this doings. She requested them to kill her first. This made the British police to

put off the shooting order. For this activity, she was named as the **Jhansi Rani of Travancore** by Mahatma Gandhi. This is just a simple sample to tell about her affection towards nation. Until her death she fought against the people, who worked opposite to the Indian nation.

A V Kuttimalu Amma is one of the noteworthy **Kerala freedom fighter**. Born in Anakara Vadakkath family of Ponnani taluq, S. Malabar, in 1905, she was drawn into the freedom movement in her youth. She and her husband K. Madhava Menon (former KPCC President and Minister in Madras State) actively participated in national movement.

Kuttimalu Amma began her public life as an active Khadi and Swadeshi worker in 1930. She led batches of women volunteers and successfully conducted picketing of foreign cloth-shops in Calicut in 1931. She was arrested for Civil-Disobedience Movement and Quit India Movement. She went to jail with her two month old baby, as she took part in the Civil-Disobedience Movement. When she reached the jail with her baby, authorities did not allow her to take the baby with her. Kuttimalu Amma insisted that she had every right to take her baby with her into the jail, quoting relevant rules. Finally, the authorities had to accede to her demand. In 1936, she was elected to the Madras Assembly. During individual Satyagraha in 1940, Kuttimalu Amma was arrested and imprisoned for a year. During Quit India Movement, she was detained for two years in the Presidency jail for women

After her release in 1944, she took up the task of organising Congress in Malabar and became KPCC President for a term. Kuttimalu Amma had also served as a member of AICC and the Congress Working Committee. In 1946 she was again elected as a member of Madras Legislative Assembly. She was Director of the 'Mathrubhumi' Calicut for some time. She expired in 1986

Only few names of Kerala freedom fighters are made public. But, countless number of people took part actively in the freedom struggle. Even though their name has not been mentioned in any record, their selfless sacrifice should be praised. As the Indian citizen we should respect the sacrifice of the people, who fought for freedom of India. If just mosquito bites we feel pain. Then think about the harsh punishments that were given by the British government to our Indians. British government did not grant freedom for India just like that. Behind this act, death and sacrifice of million people are there. Even after getting freedom, Indian soldiers are fighting against the enemies to protect our nation. Many Kerala people are serving as soldiers and **army officers in Indian army**.

Ammu Swaminadhan is one of the eminent freedom fighter of Kerala. She followed principles of Mahatma Gandhi and participated in freedom struggle without violence. This made her to occupy good place in hearts of people of Kerala. She is an active member of Constituent Assembly of India and Rajya Sabha.

UNIT-IV

WOMEN IN NARRATIVES

Goddess and Dasis in Vedas

Goddesses in Vedas represent the personification of different phenomena of nature. Rigveda has a list of female deities like Ushas, Prithvi, Aditi etc. in addition to minor goddesses associated with the sacrificial cult. Goddess Ushas personifies dawn. Prithvi is the goddess of earth. Aditi represents motherhood. Nature is perceived in the form of female. Thus Rigvedic goddesses represent different forms and entities of Prakriti. Rivers, Mountains and natural environment are depicted in feminine form.

The presence of goddess in the Rig-Vedic society very well reflects the nature of position assigned to women in the society. The Rig-Vedic male gods were not possessed superhuman qualities unlike they enjoyed in the later Vedic period. Rig-Vedic goddesses have independent status which they lost to male deities in the later Vedic period. They were placed at the margin and played a secondary and supplementary role to strong, powerful and superhuman male deities of the later Vedic period. It indicates the patriarchal values assumed by the later Vedic society.

Dasis

Dasis are women slaves mentioned in the Vedic literature. The Danastuti hymns of Rig-Veda mention dasis as one of the objects of gifts. They are distributed along with cattle and gold to priests. They are considered as movable property.

They are mainly used for domestic work rather than in production. Their service is centered on the cattle in the pastoral society of Rig-vedic period. When agriculture developed in the later Vedic period, their service was used in the agriculture sector too. They were mentioned along with dasas. In the opinion of Romila Thapar, they were used less in the agriculture sector and used mostly as domestics. The Buddhist literature too gives examples of dasis working as domestics.

Some dasis are seen in the private apartments of kings who treat them as objects of sensual pleasure. They never acquire the status of kings' wives but did not involve in household drudgery. Dasis as slave girls were ill-treated and abused by their masters. The Jataka mention one Punika who was asked to fetch water from dawn to dusk.

Sakuntala

Sankuntala is the lead female protagonist in the classic Sanskrit drama, *Abhijnansakuntalam*, written by Kalidasa. The work which is popular in India and abroad has been translated into many languages. The drama is centred on the romance, love, separation and union of Sankuntala, a girl brought up in the hermitage of Sage Knnwa and Dushinta, the king.

It seems that Kalidasa picked up the story from Mahabharata and transformed it into an elegant drama. The Sankuntala as depicted in the Mahabharata is different from the one that was depicted in Kalidasa's *Abhijnansakuntalam*. Sankuntala in Mahabharata seemed more independent. This is evident from her stance of making her marriage with Dushinta conditional. She insisted that her son to be born would become the heir to the throne of Dushinta. This was readily agreed by the king at the time of their marriage solemnized on their mutual consent. When she took her son to the court of Dushinta, he refused to abide by his words. There was a heated exchange of words between the king and Sankuntala. At the end she decides to leave her son to the court and go back to her forest hermitage. A heavenly voice interrupts at the moment and revealed that what she said was true. The king accepts the son and Sankuntala. When it was reproduced by Kalidasa centuries later Sankuntala was depicted as a shy, docile and reserved woman. She was not seen outspoken, bold or independent as was in Mahabharata. Kalidasa's Sankuntala prayed to God when she was rejected by the King. She did not make any attempt to argue or assert her stand.

Abhijnansakuntalam had attracted the attention of the Europeans in the colonial period. It was translated into English and German. Marriage by mutual consent, Gandharva form of marriage, disturbed the Europeans a lot. They described it as unwomanly and Sankuntala was not seen as a model to be imitated.

Romila Thapar in 1995 delivered a lecture during the tenth anniversary celebrations of Kali for Women. The exercise led to a brilliant essay on the Sakuntala myth. This was later published in the book form titled *Sakuntala-Texts, Readings, Histories* (1999). It shows how when a theme changes in accordance with its location at a historical moment, the change can illumine the moment, and the moment, in turn, may account for the change. The essay largely comments on the different versions of Kalidasa's *Abhigyan Sakuntalam*.

Women in Buddhism Discrimination of women is a feature common in all societies. Buddha was the first religious teacher who gave women equal and unfettered opportunities in the field of spiritual development. Although he had pointed out on several occasions the natural tendencies and weakness of women, he had also given due credit to their abilities and capabilities. He truly paved the way for women to lead a full

religious life. They were able to develop and purify their minds and realize the bliss of Nibbana just as men were. The testimonies of the Theris (Nuns) in the days of the Buddha speak amply to this fact.

The Buddha opened the gates for the full participation of women in the field of religion by making them eligible for admission to what was known as the Bhikkhuni Sangha - the Order of Nuns - that truly opened to women new avenues of culture and social service and ample opportunities for public life. This brought to women recognition of their importance to society, and greatly enhanced their social status.

According to what the Buddha taught about the Law of Karma, one is responsible for one's own action and its consequence. The well-being of a father or grandfather does not depend upon the action of the son or grandson. They were responsible for their own actions. Such enlightened teachings helped to correct the views of many people and naturally reduced the anxiety of women who were unable to produce sons to perform the 'rites of the ancestors'.

The teachings of the Buddha had done a great deal to extinguish many superstitious beliefs and meaningless rites and rituals, including animal sacrifices, from the minds of many people. When the true nature of life and death and the natural phenomena governing the universe were revealed to them, wisdom and understanding arose. This in turn helped to arrest and corrects the prevailing social injustices and prejudices that were rampant against women in the days of the Buddha, thus enabling women to lead their own way of life.

Despite the fact that the Buddha elevated the status of women, he was practical in his observations and advice given from time to time in that he realized the social and physiological differences that existed between men and women. These were depicted in the Anguttara Nikaya and Samyutta Nikaya. It was clearly mentioned that a man's duty is his unending quest for knowledge, the improvement and stabilization of his skill and craftsmanship, and dedication to his work and ability to find the wherewithal for the maintenance and sustenance of his family. On the other hand it was stated, as a matter of fact, that it was the woman's duty to look after the home, and to look after her husband.

In addition to these problems, women were also subjected to physiological pains and sufferings during their menstrual periods, pregnancy and child-birth. These are natural phenomena depicting

The Buddha's attitude towards women can also be seen when the news of the birth of a daughter was brought to his friend, King Kosala. The King was displeased at the news as he expected a son, but the Buddha, unlike any other religious teacher, paid a glowing tribute to women and mentioned certain characteristics that adorn a woman in the following words:

"Some women are indeed better (than men). Bring her up, O Lord of men. There are women who are wise, virtuous, who have high regard for mothers-in-law, and who are chaste. To such a noble wife may be born a valiant son, a Lord of Realms, who will rule a kingdom."

In advising women about their role in married life, the Buddha appreciated that the peace and harmony of a home rested largely on women's shoulders. His advice was realistic and practical when he quoted a good number of day-to-day characteristics which a woman should or should not emulate.

In the days of the Buddha, other religious teachers also spoke about the duties and obligations of a wife towards her husband, particularly stressing the duty of wives in bearing off-spring for their husbands, rendering faithful service, and providing conjugal happiness and heavenly bliss. This view is also shared by Confucianism. However, although the duties of a wife towards the husband were laid down in the Confucian code of discipline, it did not stress the duties and obligations of the husband towards the wife. The teachings of the Buddha did not have such bias towards the husbands. In the Sigalovada Sutta, the Buddha clearly mentioned the duties of a husband towards the wife and vice versa. A husband should be faithful, courteous and not despising. It is the husband's duty to hand over authority to his wife and from time to time, and to provide her with adornments.

The establishment of the Bhikkhuni Sangha - the Order of Nuns, in the 5th year of the Buddha's ministry, really paved the way for full religious freedom for women in the days of the Buddha. It was a splendid success. There arose many eminent nuns who shone brilliantly in the study and practice of the Dhamma. In the eyes of the world, Buddhism was raised to a very high level. The Therigatha containing 77 verses by individual nuns is one of the prides of Buddhist literature.

The Buddha did not place any restrictions on the nuns in the matter of teaching and preaching of the Dhamma. The Bhikkhuni Order produced a remarkable number of brilliant preachers and exponents of the Dhamma e.g. Sukha, Patacara, Khema, Dhammadinna and Maha Pajapati (the foster mother of the Buddha). Buddhism never shared the Brahmin's view that a son was essential for the father's passage to heaven. Daughters became quite as good as sons and marriage was no longer a compulsory necessity. Women under Buddhism had the liberty to lead an independent life and go about their own business. The Buddha by granting women an active share in the religious life also helped to raise their status in secular life as well.

However the admission of women into the Order was a step too advanced for the period and became short-lived. Whenever an innovation or improvement was in advance of the thinking and development of a people during a particular era, the people were

unable to adapt themselves to the improved conditions and tended to regress back to the society that they were used to. They failed to master the situation. Hostile propaganda by the Brahmins, who found their caste system undermined and privileges giving way, was also a factor that caused the decline of the Order.

In Sri Lanka, the Order of Nuns flourished till 1017 A.C in the reign of King Mahinda IV. It then disappeared and was not revived again. But the Order of Nuns was introduced into China by Sinhalese nuns, and still exists there as well as in Japan today. However, in the Mahayana tradition they occupy a subordinate place, and are by no means on par with the monks.

Syllabus

HY6B13 GENDER STUDIES

No. of Credits: 4

No. of Contact Hours per week: 5

Aim of the Course: The aim of the course is to introduce studies on women in the light of new concepts and researches.

UNIT I - Introduction

- Making women visible - Women in History - Women's work, Men's property- Space and Location of Women.
- Key Concepts and Terminologies - Sex - Gender and Gendering - Sexuality- Patriarchy - Matriarchy - Matriliny - Patriliney - Domestic Violence -Household Management.

UNIT II - Scanning the Indian Society through Women Perspective

- Brahmanical patriarchy - Wifehood - Seed and Earth - *Sthreedharma* -

Pathivratha concepts

- Widowhood
- Food as a medium of proliferation of caste
- Threefold oppression of Dalit women
- Caste and Gender.

UNIT III - Women in the Fight for Freedom and Social Justice in India -realities

- Women in the Revolt of 1857
- Participation of Santhal, Bhil and Munda women in anti British struggles
- British attitude towards women fighters.
- Eminent followers of Mahatma Gandhi
- Women in Revolutionary Movements
- Women Regiment of INA
- Women question in the social reform movement in Kerala
- Freedom movement and Kerala women.

UNIT IV - Women in Narratives

- Goddess and *Dasis* in Vedas - Sakuntala - *Jatakas* and Buddhist literature.

Readings:

- Catherne Belsay and Jane Moore (ed), *The Feminist Reader*
- Gandhi Nandhitha and Nandhitha Shah, *Issues at State; Theory and Practice in the contemporary women Movement in India.*
- Gerda Lerner, *Creation of Patriarchy*
- Kiran Pawar, *Women in India History: Vision and Venture, 1996*
- Kumkum Roy (ed), *Women in Early Indian Societies, Manohar, 1991*
- Leela Duby, *Seed and Earth*
- Peta Henderson et.al (ed), *Women's Work Men's Property*
- Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, *Sign Posts: Gender Issues in Independent India, Kali for Women, 2001.*
- Scott Joan (ed), *Feminism and History, Black Well, 1992*
- Simon De Bover, *The Second Sex,*
- Tripathi. L.K (ed), *Women in Ancient India, Banares, 1992.*
- Uma Chakravathy, *Every Day Lives – Every Day Histories. Beyond the kings and Brahmins of 'convert' India.*
- Uma Chakravathy, *Gendering Caste*
- Uma Chakravathy, *Reverting History, Life and Times of Pandita Ramabai*
- V. Geetha, *Gender, Patriarchy*
- Vandana Siva, *Staying Alive, Manohar, 1988.*
- Further Readings:**
- Anandi. T.K, *Malabarile Janakeeya Samarathinte Penvazhikal*
- Baig Tara Ali, *India's Women Power*
- Bhuthalia Urvasi, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India, Penguin, 1998.*
- Chandra Sudhir, *Colonialism Law and Women's Right*
- D'Souz. A (ed.), *Women in Contemporary India and South Asia*
- Dutt, Kalpana, *Chittagong Armoury Raiders: Reminiscences*
- Forbes Geraldine, *Women in Modern India.*
- Gerda Lerner, *Creation of Patriarchy, New York, OUP, 1986.*
- Guha Ranajith (ed.), *Subaltern Studies, Vol. I.*
- Jayavardhana Kumari, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World.*

Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, New York, 1987.

Menon. P.K.K., *Kerala in the Struggle for Independence*

Moti Chandra, *The World of Courtesans*

Nanditha Gandhi, Nanditha Shah, *Issues at Stake: Theory and Practice in the Contemporary Women's Movement in India*.

Seu Morgan (ed.), *New Feminist History Reader*, Routledge, 2006.

Usha Bala and Ansu Sharma, *Indian Women Freedom Fighters*.

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