

*Chapter - 1*  
***Introduction***

“Women Question” the term would be best understood by using the word “Feminism” which seeks to highlight women’s specific oppression in relation to men, preventing this from being submerged, amid all other unequal relationship existing in society. Thus feminism is sometimes confined to women’s struggle against oppressive gender relationships. In practise, however, women’s action both now and in the past, often have been against inter connecting relation of inequality and have involved many aspects of resistance, a round daily life and culture that are not simply about gender.

Feminism is a proposal for social transformation as well as a movement that strives to end the oppression of women. In this double aspect, feminism has always existed as part of the historical societies in which it has developed, it has been influenced by the specific social, economic and political traits of its society. As a movement, feminism has a long history or rebellion, more or less organised but always expressing opposition to the social institution that made possible the inferiority of women. This opposition has not been isolated from other forms of social struggle and this relationship has influenced both the ideology and the organisation of the movement. <sup>(1)</sup>

Charles Fourier, the french socialist argued that the degree of women’s freedom decided the extent of social progress. Women’s emancipation was thus linked to the idea of progressive social reform and historical change. But the development of feminist thought has not only been uneven, but it has always involved into deep theoretical disagreement, these partly reflects the varied needs and perception of women in different societies and situation. Within the feminist politics and feminism there are several differing political perspectives, the feminist approaches most commonly identified are those of Radical, Liberal, Marxist and Modern.

The word feminist and the theories came into existence because the traditional political theory excluded or marginalised women. The modern feminism involves a dynamic and existing body of thoughts that is highly controversial and that is constantly challenging its own assumptions.

Feminist theories have been divided into two specific ages; Primitive and Modern. Primitive feminism begins with Mary Astell ( 1666-1731 ), who has been known as the first English feminist.

Seventeenth century feminism had been inspired mainly by the conservative defender of monarchy at home as well as within the state. According to them, in state, the authority of the King over his people was sanctioned by 'God' and by nature in exactly the same way as that of father over his family. This theory of the century justifies social convenience and men's superior strength to justify the continuous subordination of women. It means they saw men as independent and rational individual capable of perceiving and pursuing their own self interest and saw women as wives and mothers and weak creatures.

Mary Astell, the strong and radical feminist has given a broader analysis of relationship between men and women. According to her

1. Women's duty is to obey her husband did not involve any recognition of his superiority. She said that men are not fit to educate children for precepts contradicted by example seldom proved effective. <sup>(2)</sup>
2. She argued that submission to male authority could not extend to single women, whether poor fatherless maids like herself or widow who have lost their masters. <sup>(3)</sup>
3. An educated women should choose to reject the domestic slavery involved in marriage and she therefore advised women to avoid matrimony <sup>(4)</sup>
4. Women's activities need not be limited by the need to attract a husband and they could therefore concentrate on improving their minds rather than their beauty. <sup>(5)</sup>
5. As a practical means of freeing women from marriage and dependence on men, she advocated the establishment of female communities, rather like secular nunneries, where women could live and learn together without men, knowing themselves capable of more things than the pitiful conquest of some wretched heart. <sup>(6)</sup>

According to Astell-man is natural enemy to woman; and woman can develop if woman would live separately from men. No doubt Astell was a radical feminist but she had some short comings in her writing that she has not said about any coherent political programme or demand that the rights of male citizens be extended to women. There is no direct challenge to woman's socio-economic position or to the sexual division of labour.

The short coming of radical feminism had given birth to the liberal feminism of eighteenth century, during this time women's rationality became less fashionable than belief in their innate weakness and dependence on men. The eighteenth century is known as the "Age of Reason and Enlightenment" which are the out come of two major events such as, The American Declaration of Independence (1776) and the French Declaration of Men and Citizen (1789). The question of rationality of men of seventeenth century was to reach to its fullest expression during this time. Philosophers of this time provided the basis for the liberal belief that as rational beings individual men have rights that must not be violated by arbitrary power, that therefore, any authority must rest upon the consent of the governed, and the individual should be as far as possible self determining and free from government control.

There were indeed a strikingly widespread consensus that the principle of rational individualism were not applicable to women, for it was held that by their very nature women were incapable of the full development of reason; thus we can find in the writing of Voltaire, Diderot, Montesquieu and above all Rousseau, the idea that women are essentially creatures of emotion and passion, who have an important role to play as wives and mothers, but who are biologically unsuited for the Public sphere (see Randall 1985, Schapiro 1978, Kenndy & Mendus 1987).<sup>(7)</sup>

But above beliefs were later challenged by Mary Wollstonecraft's in her *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792).<sup>(8)</sup> and by the French writer Condorect that women were capable of reason and should be educated accordingly, that they had therefore the same political right as men, and to deny this was an unacceptable tyranny. In practice he did not anticipate the wide spread involvement of women in politics, but this he said was no reason to deny them political rights in principle indeed he argued that women could no more be biologically excluded from politics on ground of menstruation or pregnancy than could a men because he was suffering from gout. <sup>(9)</sup> Feminism was an integral part of the complete pattern of liberalism that Condorect so enthusiastically advocated.

English historian Catherine Macaulay (1731-91) argued in her *Letter on Education* (1790) in this regard. She insisted that the difference between sexes were a product of education and environment and<sup>not</sup> of nature; she attacked the

way in which women's mind and bodies had been distorted to please men, she demanded boys and girls be given the same education, and she went beyond uncritical acceptance of male values to demand that the education of boys too be changed to provide them with traditional female skills. <sup>(10)</sup>

According to Wollstonecraft's: women are not less capable of reason than men, but vanity, weakness and frivolity were the natural attributes of her sex. She argued that if men and women equally possessed reason, they must be equally educated in its use. To her, as men's and women's common humanity based on their shared and God given possession of reason, then virtue must be the same for both sexes. She argued forcefully that a women taught only passive obedience to her husband could never be fit to bring up children, women must be given education so that they can make rational choice.

Wollstonecraft insisted that women had an independent right to education, employment, property and the protection of the civil laws; this argument was needed to ensure that women were not forced into marriage through economic necessities and that wives were not entirely dependent on the goodwill of their husbands. Women therefore needed legal rights in order to make independent rational choice and achieve virtue.

Apart from the radical and liberal school one more school is there, i.e., Utopian Socialist school ; the earliest socialist thinker St. Simon, Fourier and Robert Owen who saw relationship between the sexes and within the family as central issue. Changes in society were not seen as simply the by-product of social change or class struggle but were themselves a necessary precondition for the transformation of society. The feminist aspects of their thought were developed by their followers.

They had seen, Firstly, the goal was not equal rights with in the existing society, but within a radical transformed one in which private property was to be abolished or severely modified and in which women would have economic as well as legal independence.

Secondly, the traditional division of labour between the sexes was widely attacked, not only women were to given a full place in productive life, but men were to share communal responsibility for domestic work.

Thirdly, the family as an institution was widely condemned, it was seen as a

source of male power, a bastion of selfish individualism incompatible with socialist co-operation and a coercive restraint on free choice.

Fourthly, the importance of free expression of sexuality, and argued that free love was the necessary basis of free society.

With an attempt to put this analysis in practice, Owen established some socialist communities, the communities were proved to be more warning than inspiration, and the communities did not last for more than a few years, this was partly because optimism and idealism could not compensate for lack of practical skills and financial resources, and partly because they tended to attract all kind of opportunities and misfit and were torn by personality clashes and policy disputes; attributes to women and to the family also seem to have played a crucial role. Owen was in favour of stopping married women as a property of her husband, it was necessary to abolish not only marriage but also private property. To abolish private property, it was necessary to remove the major source of individualism and self gratification-the family. To do this, it was necessary to attack the binding force of these two-religion, naturally, abolition of these three were not such easy, actually the failure of communities is often cited as proof of the inadequacy of the Utopian Socialist's theories.

Another Utopian socialist, thinker, Charles Fourier was again radical, he was in favour of total abolishing of specialisation of more and wanted to give free choice of work. He said, some work are there which naturally attract the women, such as domestic work, but he also insisted that in any occupation, at least some of the workers should be there, who cannot perform the work normally. This meant that no men or women would be bound to one task for life and that domestic tasks like other work would be the willingly performed expression of creativity rather than mindless drudgery. Actually the idea of Fourier were never systematically applied. But even then the England feminists were inspired by the ideas of Owen where as the French feminists were inspired by the ideas of Fourier and St. Simon.

Ideas of Owen and Fourier had been more explicit in the writing of William Thompson, who was an ardent follower of Owen and Fourier.

Thompson was not simply a liberal feminist, but a socialist also. He favoured the equal rights for men and women, and he asserted that the rights of women

only can rest in the co-operative, socialist societies, where women would get full worth of their contribution. He was not in favour of capitalist system of society, where laws are made unequal. According to Thompson, whatever system of labour, whatever system of government, under every vicissitude of men's condition he has always retained women as his slave. <sup>(11)</sup> In his appeal he saw the family as a means of male domination, where women are isolated and stultified with their children, other home work and domestic work. Thompson did not support the separation between men and women rather he believed that the true interest of sexes could be reconciled .

During the nineteenth century a new turn took in the feminist conception. They inspired the movement for the total social ,legal, educational, moral etc. reformation. The feminists of this period claim the moral superiority of women over men that is why the feminists of the nineteenth century were considered more radical, and the feminist writer of this period were considered as reformist because they did not make any attack on the existing socio-economic system rather wanted the extension of legal protection and right to women.

There were a number of feminist writer in the nineteenth century such as Margarate Fuller (1810 -1850) ,Harriet Martineau (1802-1876), Sarah (1792-1873), Anjelina Grimke (1805-1879), Sushan Anthony (1820-1906), Lucy Stone (1818-1893) , B.L.Smith (1827-1891), Josephine Butler (1828-1906) etc. but Stanton, Taylor and Mill do among them cover virtually all the ideas of " Main Stream" feminism during the period.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the American Feminist, (1815-1902) developed her ideas in the context of moral reformation for the women. She had been influenced by the system prevailed in England -A women on marriage surrendered all independent legal rights , including protection from an abusive husband, the right to leave him and the right to keep her own property or earnings.

Campaigners under Stanton demanded that women who were on the receiving end of men drunkenness should have legal protection and the opportunity to escape from a violent marriage. This led to demand for the reform of divorce and child custody law, for women to have the excess of education and employment that would give them economic independence and

by the 1840s to the first organised political campaign for married women's rights to her own property. <sup>(12)</sup>

Stanton claimed that women's oppression or problem is not only the denial of legal or political rights but also in an oppressive sexual morality goes well beyond traditional liberal concerns.

Stanton campaigned publicly to change conditions of family life and marriage . She argued marriage is a form of unpaid prostitution and domestic labour , she said, for a wife had no right to deny her husband sexual access to her body and this is the root cause of women's oppression . Stanton supported by Lucy Stone - she said it is very little to me to have the right to vote to own property etc. if I may not keep my body , and it uses in my absolute right. <sup>(13)</sup>

The modern radical feminist such as Cady Stanton and Lucy Stone claimed that 'the personal is political'; private life was seen as an arena in which power is both exercise and can be challenged , and this meant that women's freedom was to be won not simply by allowing them to enter into public life , but by transforming their situation at home.

Gradually organised feminism shifted from America to England and the thinking and discussion of feminism in the mid 19th century tended to concentrate in the writing of John Stuart Mill , his Subjection of Women (1861) was the most important writing on women's position by him. His friend Harriet Taylor, whom he got married after she got widowed, was also a very strong feminist writer . Her Enfranchisement of Women (1851) is a most feminist by a woman.

At one level , Mill's the subjection of women, is simply an extension to women of the enlightened belief that an institution can be defended only if it is in accordance with reason. According to him women subordination is a barbarous relic of an earlier historical period. Far from being the inevitable outcome of attribute , it originated in force and now sanctified by custom so as to appear natural. He agreed that women appeared to be in many ways inferior to men but argued that this was a consequence of social pressure and faulty education , the result of forced repression in some directions are natural stimulation in other. <sup>(14)</sup> Women, therefore , must be given the same opportunities as the men , only then they will know their to abilities , and only then the society reap the full benefit from the talent of all its members . This

means the legal discrimination against women is wrong and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality admitting no power or privileges on the one side, nor disability on the other. <sup>(15)</sup>

According to his Subjection, he is in favour to give men and women equal political rights. There must be no bar to women's education and employment. To him, sexes play very different roles in the society, he is in favour of giving the women free will to follow the career of their choice and they should not be forced into marriage through economic necessity. He made it clear that if a woman has chosen marriage, then it is her career and the woman has to see her home and domestic work. He made it clear that this means a married woman be responsible for running the home and the common arrangement by which the man earns the income and the wife superintends the domestic expenditure. To him it is in general the most suitable division of labour between the two persons so that it is not a desirable custom that the wife should contribute by her labour to the income of the family. <sup>(16)</sup>

Mill was always in favour of mass education, legal, political power to women, plus he wanted their employment also because he had a panic of male sexual violence over female. He wrote in Subjection - However brutal a tyrant, she may be unfortunately chained to- though she may know that he hates her, though it may be his daily pleasure to torture her and though she may feel it impossible not to leave him - he can claim for her and enforce the lower degradation of a human being, that of being made the instrument of an animal function contrary to her inclination- <sup>(17)</sup>

Mill's conception regarding the tackling of domestic tyranny and granting of legal political freedom to women, are same as of Stanton, both of them were emphasised on legal and political reformation rather than economic dependency within the marriage, nor sexual division of labour, but both of them highlighted that legal and political reform is not sure to change the tyranny of male or the violence of men over women, but to stop its consciousness and their perception to each other is necessary, and consciousness only can develop through education. Through out Mill's philosophy, education in its widest sense, is a key means to social improvement.

One more aspect is remain in the field of feminism that is Marxist Feminism,

most interesting thing is that Marx himself had not produced or propagated any feminist theory, but the worker on feminism applied the theory of Marx on feminine question and stand up a theory as Marxist feminism or Marx's view on feminism. Marx's whole theory is based on the development of society and different historical phases. According to Marx, the mode of production is primarily responsible for the development of different stages, Mode of Production has from time to time changed the Economic Structure of the society and the total social system replaced into one after another form. Economy is the core of Marx's theory. He said, the mode of production of material life, conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determine their being, on the contrary their social being, that determine their consciousness. <sup>(18)</sup>

The other feminist workers and writers, extracted their view from Marx's Theory to society, to them, the implication of the whole approach for feminist theory are profound in the family and sexual relationship are like other form of social organisation placed in historical context, neither eternally given nor consciously planned, they are the product of particular historical situation and therefore, open to change in future. <sup>(19)</sup>

Engels made clear in his book, "Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State" that modern family is not natural and earliest societies, sexual relationship, were completely unregulated, and gradually evolved to take the form of the "pairing family", women were mainly in favour of this system. He said that during the primitive society, where women were responsible for domestic work, agriculture and husbandry were looked after by men. The egalitarian situation was changed by the development of a new source of power in the male sphere of activity. Women were defeated firstly when decide to overthrow the private property to their son and not to his wife. This system made women slave. She became only possessor of her husband, son and became economically dependent on men. It also mean that female oppression had no other material cause, it is a part of class society, but not a necessary or permanent feature of human relationship. From this it follows that the abolition of private property will mean an end to sex oppression. Engels believed that women of any class have to suffer, have to be exploited and harassed. To him, new and equal relationship between sexes were developed within the capitalist society. In the capitalist society, women had to work throughout pregnancy and often they had to return to work less than a

weak after giving birth, they also faced problems for sexual harassment and exploitation by the male factory owner. He said that within the bourgeois family women are even exploited, the total financial strength remain with the husband, and the wife has to ask ever for the money, so a simultaneous existence of bourgeoisie and proletariat within the family.

Marx and Engels both of them see production and reproduction as the base of the society, but none of them gives the equal role of production and reproduction in the productive process. Marx believed that Women Question is the product of capitalist economy. This implication is much more clear by the statement of Vogel that - although ofcourse Marxists never developed their feminist implication, his economic category do point out the way to an understanding of domestic labour and the role of women in capitalist economy. She argues that, if properly applied they allow us to develop an understanding of how the proletarian family and the sexual division within, serve the need of capitalism by reproducing the labour force. She said that family and sexual oppression is lying in material condition. <sup>(20)</sup>

So far Marxist society, based on materialistic interpretation so basic idea is that society will not be changed by appeals to reason and justice, but collective class struggle, that can only succeed at a particular stage of economic and social development. This means that women's oppression is given a history and that it can only be ended in context of socialist revolution i.e., itself the product of a specific historical situation. <sup>(21)</sup>

From the above statement it is clear that the Marxist feminists claim to be a comprehensive theory, and number of key points emerges which must form the basis of any coherent Marxist feminist position. Firstly, Marxist question of sex equality cannot be understood in term of abstract principles, but only in historical context.

Secondly, opposition to women's emancipation is not simply a result of injustice, rather it reflects material interest and the structured economic needs of society.

Thirdly, for women as for any other oppressed group, emancipation is not equated with political and legal rights, but can only be won by restructuring the whole of society to give full economic equality.

Fourthly, the struggle for sex equality is integrally connected to economic class struggle; full freedom for women as for men requires the replacement of capitalism by communism.

Finally, if women has to become equal to men they must achieve full economic independence, for this is to be a source of liberation, house work and child care must be recognised on a collective basis.

From the above discussion, we can come to the conclusion that all the theories, either radical or liberal or socialist or Marxist feminism, all of them believed on the emancipation of women from the exploitation either sexual or physical or mental, may be their way of thinking is different. In fact, on certain points, they oppose each other, but the ultimate view is the same, out of four, liberalism is the most expanded one.

By the end of the nineteenth century, most of the demands made by the liberalist feminist had been granted by America and Britain. Women were granted education, middle class women were granted to get employment, not only this but women legal rights such as a married women could now own her property and keep her own earnings. She had now rights, concerning the custody and welfare of children, and she had same degree of protection against physical abuse from her husband, though the divorce law still were not clear or remained of double moral standard. Women also started to enter into public life on an unprecedented scale. Working women themselves also began to organise both independent and mixed organisation. In spite of the domestic work responsibility, organisation of labour increased and women were involved in strike and trade union activities.

Enfranchising right also had given to the women, the first country was New Zealand which granted the right to vote to women in 1894, shortly followed by Australia, Finland, Norway (1914), most of the other countries granted the right shortly after the Ist World War. Britain granted the right (partially) in 1918 and in America, in 1920 the 19th Amendment to American Constitution, enfranchising all adult American women was finally ratified.

All these means that by the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century women were no longer excluded from public life and political debate, but achieved a role outside the home.

Surprisingly, again the feminism emerged and to know as Modern liberal feminism, it is just because America's failure to deliver to women the promise of independence, self expression and fulfilment of dreams.

The clearest and most famous expression of American liberal (modern) feminism is to be found in Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan argued that since the second world war American women had been manipulated and persuaded into the belief that their only fulfilment lay in domesticity and that earlier feminist dreams of education independence had been displaced by an all pervasive feminine mystique. He said simply the fact that American women were denied any opportunity for independence or self development, its most dramatic effects were not only the rise in mental illness, alcoholism and suicide among women, but it also had a highly damaging effect upon the next generation. If we continue to produce million of young mothers who stop their growth and education, short of identity, without a strong core of human values to pass on to their children, we are committing quite simply genocide starting with the mass burial of American women and ending with the progressive dehumanisation of sons and daughters. <sup>(22)</sup>

Taking into consideration the status of women and discrimination against women, a well documented book, 'The Feminist Mystique' was published by Kenndy Commission in 1963.

After the publication of the book, the effect started in the same year (1963) that Equal Pay Act was passed .In 1964 a clause prohibiting discrimination by sex was added to the Civil Right Act. But the subsequent failure of the authorities to implement the sexual aspects of the Act, gave birth to the strongest women organisation in the world known as National Organisation of Women (NOW) in 1966. The existence of Black and White racial problem had given birth to the Modern Radical feminist movement.

Women position have changed in many nation, but in many nation, still the right to education, employment to women is denied. Most surprisingly even in the most advanced nations, the public posts are hold by men. Even women as a group continue to work much longer hours than men. Women who perform for nearly two third of all working hours, receives only one tenth of the world's income, and won less than one percent of world property <sup>(23)</sup> while fear of sexual violence restricts their lives and they are denied full

control over their own production and reproduction.

However it must be understood that gender inequality is not only the root cause in inequality between men and women but race, class etc. also have very significant role to unite women within themselves against men domination, ofcourse, the problem and the cause may differ from country to country.

By and large it is felt that the discriminations and inequalities against women might be removed by the women's participation in the political process, people in mass including women only can participate actively in the Democratic form of government.

Democracy is the form of government where people's participation, direct or indirect in decision making and decision taking is a remarkable feature. The government takes important decision not only on important issues but also including the matters concerning the life of women. The policies on women upliftment are usually reflected in election manifestoes of political parties. In our socio-political feature women are not only deprived and by-passed but marginalised in decision making. It has accentuated to gender injustice, naturally the real objectives of attaining equality had been defected. To solve the problem of gender injustice, it is desirable that women should get enough power to influence the government. It is possible when women actively participate in political process.

By political process, we mean exercise of power, naturally participation in politics means participation in exercise of power, which has an active role in changing the society and the existing social system.

Participation of women in politics and in decision making process is essential because policy making and their implementation are the basic functions of the government, in this regard women can create pressure on the government and women's involvement in politics means collective endeavour for social transformation. Through involving themselves in politics women can raise voice against oppression, exploitation, injustice, degradation etc. Collective involvement of women in politics can shake all the departments of government and can raise the question against gender blindness.

Indian women's participation in politics has not been a sudden incident but a slow and gradual process.

Taking into consideration the dark, bleak and humiliating life of Indian women during the Ancient period and till nineteenth century, it would not be an over statement that women have had played an important and in fact a crucial role in the Indian Freedom Movement.

Indian freedom struggle is one of the few liberation movements in the world where women had participated in a great number.

Indian womanhood have a long history of their lifestyle and status and a great variation is found therein from the Vedic period till today. Women in the Vedic period enjoyed a highly respectable position the four wall of the house and also outside of it. Man and woman were likened to a pair of horse yoked to a chariot. <sup>(24)</sup>

In the two great epics of India the "RAMAYANA" and the "MAHABHARATA" as in religious mythology women occupy place of honour. The leading characters of Ramayana and Mahabharata include women of heroic mould such as Sita, Droupadi, Kunti and Gandhari. These legendary figures always observed as symbol of high virtues in a women - courage, sacrifices and wisdom.

During the post vedic period, women were not only shared in religious rites and ceremonies with their husbands but also participated in state matters. Evidence shows that Kumaradevi, wife of Chandragupta, the founder of the illustrious dynasty of Guptas was renamed Mahadevi, the great queen, coins were also minted in her name, a pride enjoyed by her which was accorded exclusively to ruling kings those days. <sup>(25)</sup>

Women's position in the two epoch were satisfactory due to partly religious, partly economic and political causes.

But in course of time, the position of women began to be deteriorated, perhaps it began during the Aryans, who married to the Non-aryan wives, who were not aware of ritual practice, the mistakes of the wives gave religious pandits an excuse to declare them unfit for religious purpose, for they were fit before.

With the rise of feudalism the life and position of women became just reversed then that of vedic and post-vedic period. Girls have no more right to

education, they lost their right of ritual performance, and man considered himself to superior to woman in all religious, political and economic matters. But because of the cultural qualities of women they become the objects of men's pleasure, and perhaps this had given birth to a new social evil prostitution, and this evil led to the system of polygamy, satipratha, child marriage, purdha pratha and other religious taboos.

The start of social reformation movement began in the latter part of the nineteenth century onwards had flashed a torchlight on the plight of women. The reformer and the movements have had helped and encouraged women to come forward and to participate in the social and political process of life through different aspects. Important social reformists were , for e.g. Dayanand Saraswati, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar etc.

In the Indian independence movement, Indian women participated in a big way. They left their home and join the freedom movement, though this became possible due to inspiring and farsighted leadership of Gandhiji, apart from this one more group of women were there known as "extremist" who also participated in the movement. The mobilisation of women in the large number weakened the bondage of tradition and assisted them to develop a prospective on the wider socio-political problems and consequently women were being identified above all the family and domestic life.

Women of all classes, housewives, educated and uneducated, irrespective of cast joined the movement and the consequence was marriage become simple, dowry system got weakened, education among girls went up, widow remarriage showed an upward trend.

One of the significant development of the movement was the demand for equal political rights made by delegation of distinguished women led by Smt. Sarojini Naidu to the British parliament in 1917. The consequence of the development was that women had got the right of enfranchisement and also could enter to the legislature either through election or as a nominated candidate.

In the free India since 1950, women have been representing in the parliament, but no systematic study so far has been made or conducted on them that what specific role they have had played to uplift the status of women folk in India.

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Undoubtedly, different laws and acts were made from time to time by the government of India to check the violences against women but the result have shown hopeless and bleak.

This Thesis has made an extensive study on the role played by the **INDIAN WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS**, their contribution and views towards the society along with their socio-economic and political background. Significantly the **THESIS PAPER** has extended the study since **1950 to 1995-96**.

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