

Chapter Four

Origin and Development of Darjeeling: An Overview

Among the spectacular snow covered mountains at an altitude of 2134 m the Darjeeling hill station was founded by the British in 1835 with a military cantonment and a health sanitarium. Tea plantation was started around 1850s and the British also introduced various flowers and fruits to the area. It had grown in stature which is incomparable in the world and the grand name of Darjeeling tea is now well established all over the world. The word Darjeeling comes from the Tibetan words "Dorje" meaning the thunderbolt of Indra, the king of Gods and "Ling" meaning a place or land. Thus "Dorje-Long" means the land of thunderbolts

According to some old records, Tibetan monks from 1757 to 1763 completed building of a Buddhist Monastery on the flat land atop the observatory Hill as a branch of the Pemiongchi Monastery in Sikkim. The chief abode of this newly built monastery was named after Rinzing Dorji Legden La, (Nicholas and Deki Rhodes: A Man of the Frontier, S.W. Laden La 1876-1936, His Life and Times in Darjeeling and Tibet, 2006) so the Tibetans called it "Dorji-Ling (Ling-house or abode or monastery) meaning "the place where Dorji lives".

However, some say that the observatory Hill was the highest point on the Darjeeling Ridge and attracted an awful thunder and lightning during the monsoon storms so the name Dorji-Thunderbolt and Ling-house or abode or the place of the thunderbolt became the meaning of the name Darjeeling.

Darjeeling was under the domain of Raja of Sikkim, a petty ruler who had been struggling against the growing power of Gurkhas of Nepal. They intruded into Sikkim in the year 1780 after over running the hills & valleys of Nepal.

Finally, they annexed the eastern part of Sikkim near river Tista, Tarai belt lying near river Mechi, which is now covered with valuable tea-garden areas of the Darjeeling planters. However, the extension of Darjeeling was included only in the beginning of 19th century by the East India Company.

It was in the year 1814, the war broke out between the Nepalese and the British army and they again reinstated the raja of Sikkim who had been driven out of his throne through the treaty of Titalyain 1817.

By this treaty, the Raja's sovereignty was guaranteed by the Company and the area from river Mechi to river Tista covering an area of 4,000 sq. miles was restored under him, thus the intervention of the British was successful in preventing the Gurkhas from intruding Sikkim, and the hill areas of west and southern part of river Tista. Thus Sikkim,

and the present district of Darjeeling was retained as a buffer state between Nepal and Bhutan.

The people of Darjeeling hills came into contact with the British and with Bengal subsequently through the Anglo-Nepal war or of 1814-1816 and through the signing of Treaty of Titaliya with Sikkim in 1817

Till the year 1816, the hills of Darjeeling and Tarai areas up to Phansidewa and Naxalbari was under the kingdom of Sikkim, and no king and no Nawab of Bengal ever ruled and exercised any kind of power over the Darjeeling Hills and surrounding plain areas in history. Infact, Darjeeling by default, through the lapse of British paramountcy, became the part of Bengal only after the independence of India from British Raj in the year 1947.

East India Company assumed the paramount power in Sikkim through the treaty and any disputes between Sikkim and Nepal and any other neighboring countries had to be referred to British Government. But ten years after the treaty was signed the dispute broke out between Sikkim & Nepal frontier. The first British General, Captain Lloyd visited Darjeeling for six days and through his report on 18th June, 1829, "the old Gorkha station was called Dorjeling" and "was immediately struck with its being well adapted for the purpose of the sanitarium". Governor General, Lord William Bentinck sent Captain Herbert, then Deputy Surveyor-General, to examine the country with Mr. Grant. Soon after their visit, the Court of Directors of the Company decided to make Darjeeling a valuable depot for the

temporary reception of European recruits, and a permanent cantonment for a European regiment.

By 1840 a road had been constructed by the Company from Pankhabari and the Company made their bungalow there and in Mahaldiram; a hotel was started in Kurseong and in Darjeeling and some 30 private houses and more houses were constructed in Lebong.

Geographical Location

"Flowers are everywhere. The days are cold and the sun almost seems to play hide and seek with us". – Great poet Rabindranath Tagore on Darjeeling.

Darjeeling district lies between 26 degrees 31 minutes and 27 degree 13 minutes north latitude, and between 87 degrees 59 minutes and 88 degrees 53 minutes east longitude. It has total area of 1,164 sq. miles. the main town and the administrative head-quarters of this district is situated in the lower Himalayas of 27 degree 3 minutes and 88 degree 16 minutes east longitude. It is a frontier district which runs between Nepal, Bhutan and the plain areas of West Bengal in the south and Sikkim on its north. It ranges at an altitude of 300 to 12,000 feet above sea-level.

Darjeeling is situated in the northern hill districts of West Bengal which is subdivided in two parts, Terai and hill areas. The Hilly region of Darjeling comprises three subdivisions, Darjeeling Sadar, Kurseong, Kalimopng and the Terai consists of Siliguri subdivision.

• Kalimpong, a small town which in Lepcha language means 'Ridges where we play' is a hill station and sub - division of Darjeeling district. It covers an area of 1056.5 sq kms (approx.) and the main town spreads over an area of 4 to 5 kms (app) is situated at an altitude of 1250mts. Kalimpong Till 1864, was under the domain of Bhutan, but after the Anglo-Bhutanese war of 1864-65, the Siniolchu Treaty was signed after which kalimpong was taken over by the East India Company. Earlier Kalimpong was the 'Gateway to Tibet' but with the Chinese aggression in Tibet in 1962, the trades through the Jelep La pass ceased. Eventually, Kalimpong's economy is depended on Flower Nurseries private schools, schools started by Christian Missionaries since from British Raj.

Kurseong is situated at an altitude of 1458 mts (4860ft.); Kurseong is 51 km from Siliguri and 30 km from Darjeeling. The word Kurseong means the place of White Orchid. Because of its lower elevation, Kurseong enjoys milder and very healthy climate throughout the year.

It is the beauty, peace, serenity and the pleasant climate that attracted many great persons to visit this place. Infact, some of the famous poems and songs of great poet Rabindranath Tagore were composed in Kurseong. Abanindranath, the magic painter, Tagore and great composer Atul Prasad Sen got inspiration for some of their famous works in beautiful hills of Kurseong. The great disciple of Swami Vivekananda Sister Nivedita, made Kurseong her home. Mark

Twain spent some time in Kurseong in 1885, Fazlul Haque the Prime Minister of undivided Bengal also stayed here. Netaji Subash Chandra Bose was interned by the colonial government for a couple of months in 1936 in a house at Giddapahar near Kurseong.

Economy of Darjeeling

In order to overcome the dreaded heat and nagging monsoon it was Britishers in India, who discovered and found their shelter in Darjeeling hills as the only source of beating the hot weather entirely was to avoid it by taking refuge in the Hills. As a result, several hill stations like, Darjeeling, Shimla, Mussorie, Dalhousie, Ooty, Naintal, Shilong, Cherrapunji were discovered by Europeans in the Indian subcontinent for holidays, tourism, tea and timber purposes. Darjeeling Hills were incorporated by Britishers in the eastern Himalayas into the Company's territory was mainly for Tourism, Tea, Timber. Darjeeling in the post modern era comprises of six T's - **Tea, Teak, Tourism, Toy Train, Tiger Hill and Trekkers' Paradise.**

Eventually, Darjeeling popularly came to be known as a land of three Ts: Tea, Timber, and Tourism but economically three subdivisions of Darjeeling hill is deprived as compared to Terai region, Siliguri. Most of the Tea industries which were the backbone of this region have collapsed, and due to raise of population, forest areas in this region are vanishing day by day. Tourism, floriculture is the only means of livelihood and employment for the hill people of Darjeeling district.

The people of Darjeeling

In modern times, the term "Gorkha" has been used to differentiate a "Nepali" from Nepal and a "Nepali" from India and therefore the term "Indian Gorkha " is preferred by Indians of Nepali origin. (Through the Mists of Time: The Story of Darjeeling; The Land of Indian Gorkha, Basant B. Lama, pp.33)

When the British first acquired Darjeeling Hill in 1835, it was entirely under the forest with just 138 sq. miles and with the population of nearly 100. By 1850 Dr. Campbell, the Superintendent of Darjeeling Hill reported 10,000 inhabitants in Darjeeling hills which had risen to 22,000 in 1869.

It was recorded 94,712 persons in 1871-72 and the average density of population was 81 per sq. mile. In the 1881 Census it was increased by 63% and the population was recorded 1, 55,179. In 1891, it was raised by 43.4% and was amounted to 223,314. In 1901, the population was increased by 11.5% amounting to 249,117 in number.

But it is doubted that the large population increase just from 100 could be inaccuracy of the first census. (Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling, L.S.S O'Malley, pp. 35, 36.

The rapid development of population since 1872 was mainly due to the development of tea industry and the influx of settlers to exploit the waste lands of the district. In 1872, the number of tea estates in Darjeeling was only 74 covering an area of 14,000 acres with the

plantation of tea. In 1881, the number of tea estates rose to almost double and was recorded 153 and covered an area of 30,000 acres. After 10 years there were 177 gardens with 45,000 acres which needed large number of manual laborers. During the year 1891, not less than 88,000 people were emigrated from Nepal and started settling in Darjeeling Hill. In 1901, more than two-third of the total population were amongst the tea garden coolies and their children.

The original inhabitants of the Darjeeling Hills are Lepchas or Rongpa (the ravine folks). Though their origin is obscure, they are decidedly Mongolian in feature. The greater numbers of people in Darjeeling Hills are Gorkhas. The short Mongolian type Nepalese, the Gorkhas, renowned for their military power world over, and the first to be decorated with the coveted Victoria Cross, finds jobs and security both in the British and Indian armies. They carry the traditional weapon, the Khukri- a curved ornamental knife. Among the other population are the Newars or best known as Pradhans with business skills in Nepali community, the hard working tribe are Sherpas. They are well known for their courage, stamina and for their immeasurable contributions to Mountaineering. Also much in evidence in the Hills are the Bhutias; they have migrated from Tibet, Bhutan, Sikkim and a greater bulk of Bengalee from Siliguri

subdivision and few from capital city Kolkata are mostly government employees. The hills of Darjeeling district has been described as a "Babel of Tribes and Nation" The population of

Darjeeling is mostly heterogeneous. Most of the people are Mongolian origin, chiefly belonging to Nepalese castes. The hill areas of Darjeeling district is inhabited by indigenous tribe, the Lepchas, Bhutias, with the ascendancy of the Gurkhas, the Rais and Limboos also settled in Darjeeling.

Other than native tribe Lepchas, Tibetians and Nepalese constitute the hill areas of Darjeeling district. At present is inhabited by Madhesias (people settled from the other plain areas of West Bengal and other States of India, mostly for business purposes). They are Rajathanese Marwarese, merchants from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Chinese shoe makers & Beauticians, Bengali Government employees, Muslim tailors, Hindustani mechanics, Punjabi Hotel and Restaurants owner, merchant Nepalese of Nepal. The dominant race in Darjeeling hills are Nepalese. Who are mainly known as virile race who are also known for their cheerful, honest and hard working nature. They are born cultivators, resourceful and remarkably law abiding people.

Colonel Waddell described the Nepalese race in following way: "though small in stature, the Nepalese have big hearts; and in many ways resemble the bright, joyous temperament of Japanese, though lacking refinement of the latter. Naturally, vigorous, excitable and aggressive, they are very law-abiding, driven as they have been to obedience by the draconic punishments of their Gurkha rulers. In appearance, the various tribes vary considerably; in proportion to the extent of their admixture with Aryan blood. Scratch a Russian it is said,

and you will find the tartar; but the Nepalese, even with their thin veneer of Hinduism, do not require this operation to reveal their Tartar character. The features of the great majority are markedly Mongolian, with oblique eyes, and with little and no moustache. They are generally undersized, but tough and wiry as whip-chord, and so full of energy that it is quite common to see old people scampering nimbly up and down hill in preference to walking”.

Status of Women in Darjeeling Hills

“To what extent, do women, compared with men, have access to knowledge, to economic resources and to political power, and to what degree of personal autonomy do these resources permit in the process of decision-making and choice at crucial points in the lifecycle?” (UN, 1975).

Women’s role as wives, mothers, and organizers and as basic foundation of other dimensions of social life is of extreme importance in both urban, rural areas when men are out for pastoral, other duties, the socialization of children automatically becomes mother’s business.

Our country is sharply characterized by gender disparities, although women’s status varies considerably from region to region and in all frontiers of human societal pursuits, economic, educational, scientific, legal, political, official, political and religious spheres. It is mainly socio-cultural factor, which influence the status of women in a

particular set of society. It is always culture (a set of collective experiences of ideas, norms, values and beliefs associated with a people) with its gender role inequalities and socialization (the intricate process in which culture is transmitted from one generation to another) determines the position of women in a society.

Gender roles are socially constructed. The family structure in India is mostly patriarchal in its nature. Patriarchy denotes a culture of power relationship that promotes man's supremacy and women subjugation. It encompasses institutional endorsement of man's ascendancy within the family and other social structures.

It justifies the normative process pertaining to the recognition and sustainability of his dominance in society.

Consequently a boy is looked upon as the perpetuator of the family line, and a girl 'a bird of passage'. The Indian family organization makes discrimination between the sexes. It promotes a hierarchy of classification in which man is the centre figure where as women derive their personalities from their fathers', husbands', brothers' and sons. With a secondary status, women play but a submissive role in social life. Despite several economic, political and social changes, women, are still far behind.

One of the most unflattering statistics concerning India's girl child shows that the preference for a son runs across rich as well as poor households, educated as well as illiterate families. Widespread

use of modern technology, a joint failure of medical ethics and failure to shed concept of a male heir has pushed female foeticide to high proportions. Female foeticide is just one side of the vast anti-women behavioural range in India.

The tragedy is that even women, who have the choice, opt for a male child. They feel that only with a birth of a son, they will achieve higher status and their married life will be secured. The status of any social group is determined by its levels of health-nutrition, literacy education and standard of living. However, the health of women Hill areas is more important because women of these region work harder and family economy and management depends on them. In rural areas women, as women in all social groups, are more illiterate than men. The low educational status is often reflected in their lower literacy rate, lower enrolment rate and their presence in the school. Like others social groups, the rural women share problems related to reproductive health.

There are various hypotheses about why women have relatively high or low status. The common premise is that women status is high when they contribute substantially to primary subsistence activities.

Women position is low in the societies where food getting is entirely men's job like hunting, herding or intensive agriculture. In the historical times when warfare was essential, men were more esteemed than women. Likewise in the centralised political systems men had high status. Men in most societies contribute more to primary

subsistence activities, as women have infant and child care responsibilities.

However, women contribute substantially to primary subsistence activities that depend heavily on gathering and horticulture and in which men are away on labour or pastoral duties while subsistence work has to be done. When primary and secondary subsistence activities are counted, women work more than men. Additionally, lots of myths like their childbearing state, emotions, monthly ups and downs, inability to carry heavy weights, lack of self-confidence, paucity of imagination and real creativity are used to validate women's subordination in the society. Male and female and other genders are culturally constructed categories, associated with culturally defined expected patterns of thought and behaviour that are subjected to hierarchical distinctions, advantages and disabilities.

In India the low status of women derives from a lack of control over material or social resources and from a lack of choice in the unfolding of one's destiny. This started with men maintaining their monopoly over the use of ox-drawn plough used for breaking the dry, hard packed soils. Men achieved this monopoly for essentially the same reasons that they achieved over the weapons of hunting and warfare. Their greater bodily strengths enabled them to be more efficient than women. However a single measure cannot be used to assess the status of women; rather a multi-dimensional cluster of variables is required to indicate the status.

Status is not a fixed rigid concept it changes over the time. Women occupy different positions in the social structure as they pass through the life cycle, and the very basis upon which the community ascribes power, privilege and prestige also changes.

Tribal societies have been by and large characterised as egalitarian societies especially in relation to the hierarchical character of caste society. However, it cannot be said of women status. Status of women varies in different societies. All societies offer its children the presence of two genders and related roles, according to kinship, sexuality, work, marriage and age. It also supplies the broad guidelines for undertaking these roles through a body of attitudes, specifications, metaphors and myths.

Girl Child

Before starting any further discussion or any generalization of the status of women in these areas, it is important to know the factors which help in interpreting the status of a girl child and the rights that they enjoy with in their own family.

Hill people too have son preference but do not discriminate against girls by female infanticide or sex determination tests. Boys and girls do not have similar inheritance laws. Girls may not inherit land, except in matrilineal societies or under special circumstances. Nonetheless they are not abused, hated, or subjected to strict social norms. Girls are free to participate in social events, dancing, singing

and other recreational programmes, and can marry according to their own choice. There is no dowry system in hills. Girls care for younger siblings, perform household jobs and work in the fields along with their brothers. This leaves no time for education of girls; consequently there is a gender gap in education in rural hill areas. Both boys and girls are equally exposed to hazards, infections and undernourishments. Due to poverty both boys and girls in rural hills suffer malnutrition.

However, all household members are all together involved in agriculture and subsistence tasks, and that all family members contribute long hours each day for the household economy. There is no hard and fast division of labour between the sexes, although the heavier works are done mostly by men. There is practically no such distinction as men's work and women's work. Both men and women run small businesses and shops. Farming, herding, collecting fuel and fodder, trading, the people of Darjeeling hills are a mixture of Mongolian and Aryan races. The rural people's main occupation is agriculture and they grow mainly rice, maize, ginger or work in tea gardens. A few of them grow vegetables and fruits as well.

Education is the fundamental right that provides opportunities for socio-economic uplift. The girls study up to primary or middle level and get married. Sometimes girls are withdrawn from school after three years (when they have learned to write their names) to work, with preference for education given to boys or elder sister stay in the house to take care of younger siblings and to do household work. There is

major gender disparity, in terms of more limited educational opportunities available for girls.

Women in Hills contribute most to the local economy and participate along with men in subsistence activities. In reality, women do more work than men. They participate in all agricultural activities (except ploughing) and other sectors of indigenous cottage industries. They share major responsibilities in the production process. In addition, they have to manage household chores; child rearing is also the responsibility of the women. Married women in the study area carry out all types of work at home as well as outside that are demand of mixed agro-pastoral economy. Apart from looking after the house, children and cattle major portion of the agriculture is done by women who do weeding, hoeing, harvesting and threshing. They also work at construction sites or as field or forest labour.

In the study area monogamous, polygamous and polyandrous marriages are prevalent in this region. There may be a premature death, marital discord or infertility that threatens family and especially women. There is no custom, which might be termed reversed dowry system by the parents of bride. Some ornaments are give, household things are given as security from the bride's parents, and these are retained until the parents of the girl are satisfied that the girl is being treated well and has settled down properly. However, the man has to bear the cost of the marriage much more heavily than the women in Nepali culture. A girl's father has little responsibility for making a

monetary outlay for his daughter by compulsion although he often does give a substantial gift to his daughter at the time of marriage. If a father wants to avoid that too, he can permit his daughter to elope. Most of the young boys and girls in hills get eloped and get married with or without parents consent.

Among Nepalese community a woman can leaves one man for another without obtaining a divorce. Under such circumstances the caste council or village Panchyat is likely to support the claim of the first man but public sentiment usually is that nothing can be done to force the girl to return to him .The divorcee or widow women among these communities have similar rights and duties as other married women have. In Hills there are no fixed rules for barren women. However one thing is sure that a new wife is brought to the family. Barren women are generally not abandoned, as their labour is valued even now.

Women's role in Economic Sphere

In all tasks concerned with life in the village, such as crafts, house building, watermills and work on boundary walls, construction of roads there is division between men's work and women's work. Major portion of agriculture is done by women who do weeding, hoeing, planting, harvesting and thrashing except ploughing (which are done by men) in the fields adjacent to houses or far off fields.

The other activities of women include looking after the house, children and cattle. Food processing and cooking is women's job. It is the women who with the assistance of children are largely responsible for the cattle, water fuel and fodder, and the collection of firewood. Hill women are very strong and courageous in the handling of environmental imperatives several studies dealing with pastoral societies indicate that the position of women in such societies is not very high because the actual care of the livestock and handling of economic affairs is entirely a male domain. They cook for them, rear children and carry extra burden of both mental and physical labour as compare to women of other region.

Women's Role in Political Sphere

The actual role and the empowerment of women was first highlighted in the Beijing Conference (1995). They are not ignored at household level but are not given due credit and importance at official level. Women supremacy is restricted within the family domain and does not extend to social or political spheres. It is interesting to note that although by convention every village Panchayat has a female member, the lady never bothers to attend the meeting or to take any active interest in the proceedings of Panchayat. This shows that women have a secondary importance in public affairs and community decision-making process. Women are generally bypassed and marginalized either they lack the requisite skills, or because women's heavy and unending domestic responsibilities makes attending

meetings and participating in decision making difficult. It always happens that men take over the more profitable activities.

Women in the study area has been recognized with the fact that they have been discriminated against in education, income, consumption, status and access to power; they have a worse health record than men; they suffer from social, cultural and legal discrimination and often from violence.

They are discriminated on grounds of equity (which refers to equality of opportunities and choices) and efficiency. There is need for both quantitative and qualitative measurement, for a complete set of cultural and rights indicators to assess women's rights under the Constitution of India.

When it comes to voting right, women in hills take pleasure in campaigning for their candidates and their voting rights. About 85 per cent of women in the study area exercised their right. Most of them follow the advice of their husbands or some of them are under pressure to accept the wishes of their husbands.

Violence against Women

Violence often becomes a tool to socialize family members according to prescribed norms of behaviour with an overall perspective of male dominance and control. Kelkar (1991) situates violence against women 'in the socioeconomic and political context of power relations' and it should include 'exploitation, discrimination, upholding of

unequal economic and social structures, the creation of an atmosphere of terror, threat or reprisal and forms of religio-cultural and political violence (Kelkar, 1991). However, the violence in the form of female foeticide and infanticide suffered by women of other castes and communities is not prevalent in Nepalese community but wife beating; threatening of their lives for monetary purpose by drunken husband is very popular.

Feminism

Throughout the history women have struggled to find a recognized place in society. Feminism in such case is a transformative perspective which highlighted that women are in disadvantageous position as compared to men. The difference between men and women is not in biological way but feminism focuses on equality of sexes.

Feminism is social, cultural and political movements, theories and moral philosophies which try to justify women's equality with men. It asserts that women are rational beings like men and they should have enjoyed the same legal, political rights, status and opportunity equally with men.

Although the term feminism first came to be in use in England during 1890s but the feminism history can be traced back to 17th century during the early capitalism deteriorated the life of many women

and liberal challenges were started by women themselves to challenge the political authority of such system.

According to Concise Oxford Dictionary of politics, "Feminism is a way of looking at the world which women occupy from the perspective of women. It has at its central focus, the concept of patriarchy which can be described as a system of male authority which oppresses women through its social, political and economic institutions. Feminism is therefore, a critique of patriarchy on the one hand and an ideology committed to women's emancipation on the other".

Until the dawn of the industrial Revolution in 1868, the status of women was almost the same throughout the world. In Greek states women were a subject of admiration of her grace and motherly glory, she was completely subordinate to men.

The position of women was no better in the Roman Empire. In Germany, during early medieval society, husbands fully controlled their wives as his right, known as right to "mundium" (Indira Kulshreshtha, 1992)

Women's inferior position dates back from the twelfth century of military society and found greater support from Confucianist orthodoxy of the Tokugawa period. Conventional and traditional values were practiced by many Asian countries to discriminate women at various levels (Manisha Behal, 1992)

In the beginning, women's unequal position was challenged to change by literary writings of Marry Wollstonecraft's, 'a vindication of Rights of women (1869), Simon DeBeauvoir's 'Second Sex' & others like Marie Curie in the field of science, Marie Stopes in Medicine brought forward the issue of women's right in people's awareness.

Many social movements and the Suffrage movements of different countries of the world brought women's participation in politics. Even various inventions like typewriter, gave women a new skill & a job opportunity outside their houses. During the First World War, women started working in factories.

In United States women's Suffrage rights was first started by women themselves. The enfranchisement of women was the result of first wave of Feminism of late 19th century by prominent women like, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. In United Kingdom, Ann Knight, a Quaker in the year 1847, produced the first recognizable women's suffrage pamphlet which was preceded by the first British Suffrage organization in 1851. Similarly, in Germany and France, it began during 1860s and in Nordic countries it started in 1870s and 1880s.

Women movement in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Middle East countries started only in 20th century. Even though heavily male populated country like New Zealand was first to introduce Universal Suffrage in 1893, the women suffrage movement in New Zealand was carried by Katherine Sheppard.

She was also one of the founding members of WCTU, an organization which tried to spread women's movement in other parts of the world with slogans like, "All that separates, whether of race, class, creed, or sex, is inhuman, and must be overcome."

Women suffrage means the right of women to vote on the same terms as men. The main aim of suffrage is giving women's voting right. The first country to give enfranchisement to women in national elections was Tavolara in 1886 which was followed by New Zealand in 1893 & the first country in the world to give opportunity to women to contest election as well as to cast their vote in Finland in the year 1905.

The main slogan of first wave feminism in Europe was:

1. Personal is political

and

2. Sisterhood is powerful

3. The main theme of 'personal is political' asserted that, women's lives are not the result of their individual choice (their ideas, behavior) but it is shaped and characterized by the particular structure of the society. Women were discriminated, treated unequally not by governing the rule of nature but the very existing man made structures of the society deprived women from their natural rights and opportunities. Thus, the first wave

feminists gave clamor to unite women from all over the world to claim and fight for their equal rights with fellow men by asserting slogans like, 'sisterhood is powerful.'

Liberal Feminists' movement started during French Revolution and by the writings of Marry Wollstonecraft in 1792. During those days, women were barred from enfranchisement, they were treated unfit for education, many occupations; married women had no property rights, legal rights, and right to divorce even the abusive husbands.

Wollstonecraft (1759-97) stated that, like men women are rational individuals and they should have equal rights with men. She also started women's right to education, employment, property, and voting rights. Her efforts found a concrete expression in United Kingdom, United States of America by protagonists of women's suffrage in these countries. In 1848, the first ever women's rights convention was held at Seneca falls in United States. In England, women's movement started by the writings of eminent English philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806-73) who also introduced the question of women's suffrage to the House of Commons in 1867 & though his literary work 'The Subjection of Women' which was published in 1869 through which women's legal, political equality with men was identified and it provided full scale analysis of women's situation to fight against their rights.

In Germany it was Karl Marx (1818-83) and his close associate Engels from United Kingdom (1820-95) argued that the family, sexual relationships are other forms of social organization and the product of a particular stage of economic development. So, it can not be changed at will but only through class struggle and revolution the socio-economic conditions of the society can be changed. It was further developed by his friend Engel in his work, 'The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State' in 1884. He argued that, women's oppression has not always existed but it began with private property and class society from which men's desire to pass property to motivate them to control women. Such motivation of men can be over thrown only by overthrowing capitalists system.

Marx & Engel's ideas were appreciated and followed by August Babel (1840-1930) & Clara Zetkin (1857-1933) in Germany. They provided and started the analysis of women's oppression by Marxists in Russia. In America, Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935) started a highly popular woman-centered theory of history and stated that society is evolving towards the 'womanly values'. In Great Britain, socialism owed little to Marxists ideology and compatible with the feminism ideas of social justice and a better life for all. However, when it came to campaign for women's suffrage rights, the issues of gender and class seemed to be conflicting and unacceptable factor.

In Britain, more than giving equal rights, suffrage to women started on the basis of women's difference from men specific on

women's sex virtues like, pacifism and temperance that should be allowed to political condition of the country and not to challenge women's' existing deplorable social conditions and their roles as wives, mothers and the trauma of women's sexual oppression by men. Modern radical feminists argued that sexual oppression of men was tried to cover by giving voting rights to women. Since it gave women the power to resist men's sexual hunger and demands (along with the dangers of dreaded sexual transmissible disease and pregnancy) which was popularly coined by Christable Pankhurst's famous slogan like, 'Votes for Women: Chastity for Men.'

Despite challenges, imprisonment, forced feedings women won the vote in New Zealand, United States, Sweden, Spain, Chile, & Myanmar. After the end of World War II, countries like, France, Italy, Romania, Yugoslavia, and China all these countries gave voting rights to the women. The same trend was followed in Third World countries after their independence from colonial rules during the Cold War era.

Surprisingly, countries with longer histories of democratic principles keep denying voting rights to women. Country like, Switzerland, for instance, denied vote in the federal elections till 1971 and finally gave the enfranchisement to women only in the year 1990. Even Middle East countries started voting rights to women quite lately. Quarter gave voting rights to women in 1999, Bahrain in 2001, and Oman 2003, Kuwait in May 2005. In Saudi Arabia, women are still restricted and denied from their voting rights till 2005.

In Lebanon, unlike men, educational proof is required for women to vote and women's votes are optional & men's votes are legal. In Bhutan, only one vote is allowed from a family at the village level (where male member of the family either father, husband, brother will cast their single vote) Unlike, western feminism movement, the Third World feminism is the product of colonialism and fight against social evils of the patriarchal society. Western women were fighting for maintaining Equality, Legal, Political Rights of women, the Third World feminists emphasized mostly on liberty from poverty and the educational rights of women.

Today, feminism is challenged by the **'Problem of Representation'** (who speaks from whom and on what basis?) such privilege is widely based on race, class, sexual privileges and the experiences.

Feminist Movement was an important stepping-stone in the demands for women's Equal Rights and their redefined role in society. The ideas that women are disadvantaged in comparison with the men and that disadvantage is not natural and inevitable biological differences but some thing that should be changed or challenged gave birth to Feminism.

The term feminism first came to use in England (1890s) though the term was already used in 17th century when the situation of women was worse in the legal and economic situation and the question of arbitrary power of men was raising. From Feminism,

women have learned the capability of their potential as women, the strength of women having common self interest with other women and common oppression.

Feminism encouraged fighting for liberation. Feminism focused on women's love and hate- love for other women bound by the same conditions, hate for the oppression that binds them together. A great strength in Feminism is the reaffirmation of human values, ideals of sisterhood and development potential, taking care of people and being sensitive to people's need. Women's situation and the inequalities between men and women were the central political issues of feminism.

The First women's Rights convention held in 1848 in America dealing with women's right to education, property, education and the franchise saw the equal growth of feminism in the industrialized world. The feminism emerged in 19th century in Europe was based on two principles of –

1. Personal is political and
2. Sisterhood is powerful.

Discrimination of women should analyze from the existing social and ideological structures of society, and second principle states that women hood should be formed on the basis of all united women. Later on feminism comprised of a number of social, cultural and political movements, theories and moral philosophies concerned with gender

inequalities and discrimination against women. It focused on equality of sexes. Opinions of feminists differ over the sources of inequality, how to attain equality and gender based questions and criticism.

It may be pointed out that, on the basis of three waves each dealing with different aspects, feminism was divided by different opinion of different feminist scholars.

1. Feminist movement of 19th and 20th century mainly dealt with the voting rights in the UK and USA. It focused on the right of women's suffrage.
2. Feminist movement of 1960s –1980s dealt with the inequality of laws as well as cultural inequality faced by women.
3. Feminist movement of 1990s- currently dealt with continuations and a response to the perceived failures of the second –wave.

Sufficient scope for understanding women's movement in India was provided by the theoretical maturity and sophistication in the contemporary feminist intellectuals. Women's movement in India was an issue, ideological trends, intensity and form of struggle, public visibility and their impact to others. Citizen claim to participate for equals in the political and development process for women. The complexities and pluralities of Indian women are placed due to the idea of difference of sex. The real definition of women's movement was organized efforts of groups of women to change their system of economic, cultural and political inequality. In order to serve the needs

of women's new urgencies and priorities in which their effort was to correct the existing social, economic and political institutions.

Gandhi on Women

From 1920s onwards women movement and activists found their new direction under the leadership of Gandhiji to fight against social mal practices against women and at the same time to fight the battle against colonial rule by participating in public life for national freedom movement regardless of class, creed, religion & caste.

Mahatma Gandhi's legacy to the world and to India is immeasurable. His life and work have left an impact on every aspects of Indian life. Nobody in modern times has done more than Gandhiji for the upliftment, betterment of the conditions of Indian women. Gandhiji said, "To call woman the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to woman. If, by strength is meant brute strength, then indeed the woman are less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then women is immeasurably man's superior" and "If women would forget that they belong to the weaker sex, then no doubt they can do infinitely more than men against war."

Gandhiji never advocated blindly the ancient Indian tradition. He firmly believed that its strong current may help us swim far, or sink us; to him the deciding question of every human being is whether the same tradition would be able to take us closer to God or Truth, and to the selfless service and love of all human beings. He once declared

that, he do not subscribe to the superstition that everything is good because it is ancient and never believed either that anything is good because it is Indian... Any tradition, however ancient, if consistent with morality, is fit to be banished from the land. Untouchability may be considered an ancient tradition, the institution of child widowhood and child marriage may be considered to be an ancient tradition. He would rather sweep those traditions out of existence if he had power do so. He disregarded ancient belief that, women should be protected by her father in her childhood, she should be protected by her husband in her youth, and protected by her sons in her old age. Gandhiji found that; such Indian tradition was harmful to all, and unjust to women.

He spoke strongly against child marriages, the isolation and subjugation of widows, unequal treatment of women, and women's own subservient mentality. To him, ethical religion is where "True morality consists, and not in following the beaten track, but in finding out the true path for ourselves and in fearlessly following it".

When Gandhiji took the leadership of national movements of India, the average life span of Indian women was only twenty seven years. Since, pregnant women with their babies had high risk of dying young due to child marriage and the vast gap between the ages of wives and their spouses. Only 2% of women used to get any kind of education. In northern part of India, women used to practice purdah (veil) system and they were not supposed to go outside the house

without men's company. Those who used to go to schools, they used to travel in tangas. (Covered Carts).

From 1920s onwards, women movement and activists found their new direction under Gandhiji's social leadership to fight against social mal practices and at the same time to fight the battle against colonial rule by participating in public life for national freedom movement regardless of class, creed, religion, and caste. In early 1927, he emphasized that humanity will remain diminished as long as women are "caged and confined in their houses and little courtyards." Gandhiji's utter purity of character and his sincere dedication towards the cause of humanity made women from all walks of life to march in processions, defy laws, resist police atrocities, go to jail unescorted by men.

He did not consider man's wrong to be woman's right in her pursuit of equality. He was against blind adherence of tradition, superstitious beliefs. He always believed and advocated selfless service, non-violence and love towards all kind of human being. Even in his literary works, like **The Stories of My Experiments with Truth, Women and Social Injustice, Young India, Harijan**, he mostly wrote about the women, Ahimsa (Non-Violence), and equality among people.

In Gandhiji's complete reform movement, the mass mobilization of women not only weakened the bondage of Indian tradition but it also helped in developing wide socio, economic and political

perspectives and consequently the position of Indian women were being identified above the family and the domestic life.

In 1936, while raising a very pertinent issue which is relevant even today, Gandhiji questioned the value of higher education among the younger generations of India and its failure to defy a custom of compulsory marriage with dowry paid and received. He declared that there was something radically lacking in the Indian system of education that made the educated so insensitive to some evil Indian customs and ready to yield to them. While challenging the dowry system in India, he even challenged the girls to remain spinsters if needed.

In 1940 while reviewing his twenty-five years of work in India and concerning on women's role in Indian society, he said, "My contribution to the great problem lies in my presenting for acceptance truth and ahimsa (non-violence) in every walks of life, whether for individuals and for nations. I have hugged the hope that in this woman will be the unquestioned leader and, having thus found her place in human evolution, will shed her inferiority complex... Woman is the incarnation of ahimsa. Ahimsa means infinite love, which again means infinite capacity for suffering. And who but woman, the mother of man, shows this capacity in the largest measure... Let her translate that love to the whole of humanity... And she will occupy her proud position by the side of man... She can become the leader in Satyagraha..."

To him, men and women are one in essence. The soul in both is the same. They both lead the same life and share the same feelings.

Each is compliment to the other and one cannot live without other's active help. But still somehow men have dominated women from the ages.

Gandhiji held that women's grace lay on in her modesty, and character. He disregarded woman as man's plaything, a competitor and an inferior sex. He said by imparting education to women which is their birth right women can gain new confidence and awareness of their strength. Through Gandhiji's contributinal work towards women and social reform movement brought favorable atmosphere to improve the status of degraded Indian women. While his nationalist movement gave impetus and opportunities to women to take part in public life and made them experience and realize their new found freedom and their new sense of capacity and strength. Since, Gandhiji strongly believed that, "womanhood is restricted to kitchen" and "only when the woman is liberated from the slavery of the kitchen, that the true spirit may be discovered". But that does not meant that women should stop doing household work but he meant that the work should be shared with men, women, and children. He even criticized India's craze for progeny. He said when girl children are not treated equally and as natural as the boy children, our nation will be in dark eclipse.

Mahatma never had any specific program for women but he was always accompanied by women in his movements like, Civil Disobedience, Non-Cooperation due to his generous and equal treatment towards women and his open comments towards ancient

Indian traditions and institutions of Child Widowhood, Child Marriage, Untouchability and the age old bonded status of women as a daughter, wife and as a mother.

He firmly believed that, “intellectually, mentally, spiritually, woman is equivalent to a male and she can participate in every activity.” Even in his message, while addressing the All India Women’s Conference on 23rd December 1936, he said, “when we call women abala becomes sabla, all those who are helpless will become powerful.” For such Empowering Speech and his loyal, true contribution towards women made Indian women to set aside their traditional roles; they came out of their seclusion and cast their purdah and entered into public activities along with men to offer Satyagraha.

With the help of Gandhiji and other national leaders and social reformers Indian women made great strides in emancipating themselves and took active roles in national movements at the same time. Veena Mazumdar wrote, ‘As early as 1931, Indian National Congress postulated freedom, justice, dignity and equality for women as essential for nation building. Kuppuswamy wrote that in 1932, Indian women leaders demanded Universal Adult Franchise. Their close association and active parts in national movement and political affairs of the country encouraged them to bring radical changes in their existing status through their organized groups and with the help of protagonist, enlightened Indian men who also supported their case. Moreover, the liberal nature of Indian feminism gave conducive

environment to give equal rights to women along with reform movement and national movements of the country.

After the independence of the country and when the Constitution was drafted in the year of 1950, Indian women with men got their right of equality, right to education, right to vote, right to enter into profession, public services and political offices. But after independence, the active Indian women, both in politics and social welfare, lost their dynamism and strength after independence and when the Constitution granted equality and rights to women theoretically. Even veteran women leaders like, Kamaladevi, who once regarded women's movement was the great part of social upsurge for deep rooted changes to bring nation into independence and towards development, lamented the declining role of women after the independence. She commented that, "the vast concourse of women who had poured into the freedom arena, had slipped back into their grooves.... The women leaders too settled in, though in new social grooves of power and position that independence had thrown up. They forged no link with the wide mass of women who are only approached briefly at voting time to secure their ballot papers."

Whereas, Veena Mazumdar had other reason for women's declining role after independence. In her opinion, 'in post independence era, women were not able to synchronise new rights with age-old traditions and various disabilities as well as gradual

isolation from various politico-ideological struggles led to fragmentations of the women's movement.

Krishna Raj and Desai have other reasons for downfall of women's organization after independence. They said that after independence in India there started different kind of social organizations to establish social equity within the country. Moreover, in 1953, a Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) was started to improve and explore the various welfare programmes for which even financial assistance and professional advisors came forward to made those organizations more workable. As a result of all these factors, the women's organizations lost their activism and dynamism towards women's issues. Though Mahila Mandals, under Government's assistance was started in different villages of India but even this women organization remained only theoretical and organizations of paper in its nature. However, Suma Chitnis remarked that, in the countries of Europe and North America, equality was the central concept of their political philosophies, but in practice they refused to accept women as equal to men due to which western feminists had to organize themselves radically to fight a forceful battle against the political philosophy and managed to give suffrage rights to women. But when it comes to India, the scenario is totally different. Indian women never had to fight for equal voting rights with men.

Moreover, our society has always been hierarchical in its nature and is based on caste, age sex, kinship relationship, and in ordinal

positions etc. and from ages such system has been maintained through families and Indian communities by the means of customs, traditions and religious beliefs. Such a traditional system of our societies made obligation and obedience towards higher caste, class, superiors and naturally towards men. Treating women unequally due to their inferior and subdued characters was as natural as the physical difference between men and women. Women themselves accepted the Second Class Citizen of the country. Unlike, western countries, there were no gap between political philosophy and in real practice women never retaliated for the equal status and rights. Since, they always regarded themselves to be protected by father at an early age, by husband when they get married, and under the protection of their sons at the old age.

Moreover, during freedom movement, Indian elite men came forward to work for women's emancipation from social evils like Sati system, Child marriage, and to start widow remarriage in Indian society and for women's education. Western women adopted anti-men approach and attitude of confrontation to get their rights while the Indian women preferred the path of understanding, compromise, and humble submission. Beside all these factors were conscious and ignorant about all the facilities, rights provided to them by the Constitution of the country. Indian feminism flourished and reached its peak level during the reform movements and freedom movements of 19th & 20th centuries. But after independence, they lost either earlier enthusiasm and aggressiveness soon after independence.

The Indian feminist movement remained inactive and subdued till the late 1960s. Even the Indian Planning Commission, till late 1960s, did not do much and focus on women's issues. Indian women after 1960 though participated in various social reforms of the country.

Although, the National Federation of Indian women was formed in 1954 by active Leftwing members of the AIWC, but more than elite women, the women from rural poor background and tribal women, working class women of India, mobilized themselves with men to fight against degrading situation of the sovereign country. Vibhuti Patel wrote that the radicalization process of masses during mid and late sixties was mainly struggle of working class people against capitalism. Women played active role in Tebhaga movement in Bengal and Andhra Pradesh for obtaining equal distribution of land. In such movements women even formed 'women brigades' to protect villages, homes, and children and to resist police atrocities. They started self defense, guerrilla training for such purposes. The Tebhaga movements of Bengal and Andhra Pradesh led the passing of Zamindari abolition acts in many other states of India. In early years of 1950s also granted some rights to the tillers of the land. Indian women actively participated in the Naxalbari Movement and fought a forceful battle for which seven women had to lose their lives while retaliating against CRP atrocities in states like, West Bengal, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh & Kerala.

The rural women and tribal women in India, showed bold steps to tackle exploitative landlords and corrupt officials in Maharashtra in

Dulia district in 1972. Moreover, the issues like, alcoholism and wife beating and agitations against rape victims, drew many women to take the law in their hands.

When elite women were busy in attending seminars, workshops and busy with cultural programmes women from grass root level and middle class women with various party background came forward to fight against anti-price rise movement of early seventies. The whole nation appreciated & praised women's brave role in "Chipko Movement" of Garhwal in Himachal Pradesh. In March 1974, when forest officials and contractors came to cut down the trees for commercial purposes, women of that forest literally came forward and hugged the trees in order to maintain ecological balance and save environment from pollution and destruction by saving each tree from falling down from the hands of forests authorities and they became successful in such a generous purpose.

The women's movement in India during 1970s and 80s was diverse, autonomous in their natures which co-existed with other numerous movements and were highly decentralized by various organizations from both associated cities and rural areas. The activists and participants were also from different backgrounds, classes and communities and with various political parties background (Socialist, Communist) or were either elite, urban, feminists or rural and tribal women.

Their motive was not just to pass resolutions and send women delegations to various authorities but they seriously fought and agitated to uproot some of the social evils from the society like, domestic violence, rape, dowry system, bride burning, and other social, environmental issues.

Since, 1970s India constituted a watershed landmark in the history of women's movement various events like unrest within the country due to failure of government, rampant poverty, tardy land reforms, caste-based tensions, heavy industrialization, commercial forestry, capital intensive agriculture benefited few at the expense of large section of the people, rising questions about the structures of power, unequal distribution of power and resources. All these factors lead the issues of women within family, their violence exploitation within family, work distribution and unequal payment unequal distribution of resources between men and women, various other issues of women and men their relationships & women's and women's sexuality. The decade of seventy saw an intensified negative trend of development especially towards women which led autonomous women's movement and brought mass Indian women to organize themselves to fight for their equality, right and against matters relating to violence of women.

Moreover, the term empowerment which became popular and started from third world feminists including India in 1976 for women's struggle for social justice and equality. It brought new kind of flow in

women's movement for striving power and for changing the balance of power to gain control over resources, ideology through decision making process. Empowerment is not to be used as a mode of domination but as a strength and ability to influence social, political processes to redistribute the power among various classes, castes, races, ethnic groups and genders. Thus, with the flow of funds and the international cognizance towards women's issues for a new trend in India to fight against issues like, violence, poverty, work, unemployment, property, health, dowry deaths, illiteracy, law's bias against women, rape, harassment, assault in workplace, foeticide and other gender issues.

Women's Movement in India has roughly gone through the following stages –

1. The first was from 1927-1940s'. This stage is generally known as Elite women's stage.
2. Second stage was from 1950-1970 which witnessed the downfall of women's movement and their active roles.
3. Third stage was from 1971-1985. The stage of Empowerment of women with the rise of feminism in India for the purpose of the socio-economic, political environmental issues. This stage was the emergence of ecofeminism in India.

4. The fourth stage started from 1985 to till date started with modest and collective women's effort to fight for political, gender issues and gender crimes.

The Third stage of women's movement in India saw crucial development after a long set back. During 1975, the CSWL Report "Towards Equality" was published which highlighted the deprived condition of women and at the same time when International women's day was celebrated for the first time on 8th March & the year and the decade was declared as International women's year, decade respectively. But due to emergency in India during Mrs. Indira Gandhi's Government, women's development was restricted. From 1977, various autonomous feminist groups came up with their new ideas and issues they were different from the mainstream women's organizations. Unlike, earlier feminists, the new feminists started having close contacts with women victimized from various social issues, and women from grassroots level. They prove to be radical in their ideas and work to fight for women's rights & for their cause.

Veena Mazumdar noted the activities of Indian feminists' movement from 1970s in following words, 'Events like initiating of International Women's Decade and UN Conference in Mexico influenced feminism movement in India also.

At national level various factors like, the declaration of emergency, post emergency, upsurge in favor of civil rights, the mushrooming of women's organizations in the early 1980s and the

arrival of the women's issues on national agenda led to resurgence of the women's movement.'

Since, 1980s the reproductive role of women was only regarded as natural but was hurdling in their way of receiving even the existing rights. Secondly, due to rise of free market capitalism and globalization, Indian women found their new found freedom by getting involved in private sectors and workplace by overthrowing tradition, cultures of ongoing Indian society.

Mazumdar again noted and commented that the period from 1970s and 1990s as a period of transition in women's movement in India. The factors like, dubious contribution of 'development' of nation and welfare towards women in all grounds were recognized in India due to a wide gap between men and women, falling women's sex ratio, issues of Girl Child, greater gap in life expectancy, mortality & economic rates, both societal and domestic violence, pre natal test, female foeticide, marital rape, killing of girl children, and honor killings, incident like, Mathura rape case made nation wide campaign during 1979-80 and made women activists successful in amending certain Indian laws regarding rape of women. Similarly in 1982, anti-dowry agitation was started by women's organizations in Delhi and other parts of India.

They brought many issues and evidences against dowry related murders being treated as 'suicide & accident' by various in-laws of women. In the name of 'Dahej Virodhi' women from almost every part

of the country campaigned and raised their voice against bride burning and their tortures 'Chetna Manch' an organization of women, finally became successful in pressurizing government to act against Dahej system in India. Law Commission of India as well as a Joint Committee of both the Houses of Parliament sat together to discuss the matter dowry of Indian society and Dowry Prohibition act was amended in the Constitution of India. In spite of Prohibition Act and legal measures towards dowry, it continues to be social taboo of our society.

In 1980s women organizations made explicit demand for the imperative development for women in Sixth Plan of India. The mounting pressure coming from various women activists and MPs, the Sixth Plan included a chapter on Women and Development. It provides the joint titles for both men and women in matters of assets distribution. In 1985, Rajiv Gandhi government gave women greater priority than before and hailed the 2nd NAM (Non-Aligned Movement) Conference on women and development. The two documents released in 1988 however showed widening gap between the perspectives of Government and Movement of women based on gender issues, roles and participation. However, in 1994 through 73rd & 74th Amendment Act of the Indian Constitution, 33% reservation of seats for women at grassroots level was passed in India.