

A Review Study on Women's Movement After Independence From 1947 To 2022 With Reference to Eastern India

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Abstract

The women's movement in India after Independence has changed with socio-political, economic, and cultural conditions. This overview explores Eastern India's women's movements from 1947 to 2022, focusing on West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam, and the northeast. The study traces women's advocacy, legislative reforms, and grassroots mobilisation through literature, official reports, policy documents, and scholarly research. The examination shows how post-independence welfare-oriented programs became rights-based campaigns for gender equality, education, employment, political involvement, and protection from violence and discrimination. It also examines how women's organisations, self-help groups, civil society organisations, and social reformers have addressed domestic abuse, trafficking, dowry, child marriage, unequal resource access, and workplace discrimination. Eastern India's particular socio-cultural contexts—tribal identities, regional political dynamics, economic gaps, environmental challenges, and intersectional inequalities—have created movements. Constitutional safeguards, legislative reforms, and government welfare schemes have improved women's status, but gender-based violence, wage inequality, limited political representation, and health and education disparities continue to hinder gender justice. The assessment indicates that institutional support, inclusive policy implementation, women's leadership, and community participation are necessary to sustain the women's movement. This study helps explain the evolution, successes, obstacles, and future of Eastern India's women's movements in post-independence India.

Keywords: Women's Movement, Post-Independence India, Eastern India, Women's Empowerment, Feminism, Social Reform, Public Policy.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian women's movement is one of the most important social movements in modern history. Since India's independence in 1947, women have shaped its political, economic, social, and cultural development. The Indian Constitution guarantees equality before the law and prohibits sex discrimination, but women still face gender discrimination, unequal access to education and employment, violence, inadequate healthcare, and limited decision-making power. Thus, the women's movement now seeks equal rights, social fairness, dignity, and empowerment for women in varied social and cultural situations.

After independence, the women's movement went through numerous stages. Welfare, legislative changes, education, and state-led and voluntary social development dominated the early decades (1947–1969). From the 1970s, nationwide efforts against dowry killings, rape, domestic abuse, custodial violence, and employment discrimination grew. The 1974 Committee on the Status of Women in India study, *Towards Equality*, revealed gender inequality despite constitutional safeguards, marking a turning point. During this time, autonomous women's organisations and public feminist participation increased.

Economic liberalisation after 1991 gave women new chances and challenges. Education, employment, entrepreneurship, and local governance increased women's involvement in society, while globalisation, migration, informal work, trafficking, and digital inequality raised concerns. Women's movements tackled sexual harassment, political representation, reproductive rights, environmental justice, cyber safety, and intersectional discrimination in the 21st century. Social media and digital campaigns raised awareness and mobilised action nationwide.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Devenish Annie (2025). As India transitioned from colonial control in 1945, the All-India Women's Conference (AIWC) created the Indian Women's Charter of Rights and Duties as a strategic tool to institutionalise gender equality in the new nation state. In 1954, FEDSAW, the Federation of South African Women, in the face of mounting apartheid tyranny, adopted the Women's Charter, also aimed at uniting all women for the abolition of political, legal, economic and social restrictions. This study studies the feminist nature of these charters and

their usage by their women's movements to deal with the contradictions between nationalism and feminism. It also considers the neglected impact of the FEDSAW Charter on the liberation movement in South Africa, the extent to which both charters informed the constitution-writing process in both nations, and the broader impact of the AIWC Charter in the international arena. It contends that engaging with these two charters in a broader context of Third World left feminist transnationalism can allow for a historiographical reapplication of their respective women's movements, and de-center the nodal point of transnational feminist organising in the late 1940s and 1950s to the Global North.

Waang Akoijam, Singh Reena (2024). A project with the title "Feminist Perspectives in Manipuri Movements: Women's Agency and Collective Action" is being undertaken with the intention of doing research and analysis on the role that women play within social, political, and cultural movements in the state of Manipur. Teresa Rehman's "The Mothers of Manipur" and Thokchom Binarani Devi's "Women's Movement in Manipur" both write about these movements and illustrate them in their own works. The purpose of this study is to conduct an in-depth investigation and analysis of the role that women play within these movements.

Rathnam, R. (2024). The postcolonial elite brings not only the inherited colonial institutions but also the beliefs that drive the institutional machinery of their communities. The paper argues that the values circulating among the elite sections of Indian society influence the leadership of Women's Movements in India (WMI). Their relationship with religion in modern India is no different. WMI has made significant attempts to understand and work with the 'religious other'. The leadership of the organisation is predominantly urban, English-speaking, professionally qualified, Hindu, and upper-caste, which suggests that their social places inform their praxis. Feminism and secularism share a common ancestry with liberal humanism after the Enlightenment. This paper attempts to redraw these connections in the postcolonial context of India through empirical data and an analysis of documented histories of WMI that trace the movements' engagement with religion in the colonised past and contemporary postcolonial times.

Giri Suryakant A., Jadhav Sushama V. (2024). Indian women undoubtedly became much more significant in their nation's social and political realms following independence. Even though most women were still uninformed at the time of Independence, they refused to let the fire that burnt in their souls go out. They made a number of progressive choices, like banding together to fight for new objectives. Gender equality, employment opportunities, changing laws that provided women only partial justice, and establishing a society free from intellectual, physical, and emotional oppression were the objectives. Despite the conservative view of their counterparts, women activists and concerned organisations were successful in raising awareness among middle-class and upper-middle-class women in general, even though their efforts were delayed in achieving a significant breakthrough. It gradually reached the lower levels of the current political system. Since then, they have been frantically attempting to develop a new identity or self-concept that is completely independent of the one imposed by tradition. We must examine the women's movement from Independence to the present in order to evaluate the status of Indian women now. The various groups and ideologies that have developed in India since independence will undoubtedly be included.

Mandal, M., Iqbal, R. (2023). There can be no question that Indian women have been far more powerful in the social and political life of their country since independence. Most women at the time of Independence were still clueless, but they would not let the fire that burnt in their spirits to die. They took some progressive decisions, for instance banding together to fight for new goals. Its aims were equality of the sexes, employment possibilities, revision of the laws which provided women only partial justice and a society free from intellectual, physical and emotional tyranny. while their counterparts were conservative. Women activists and concerned organisations succeeded in generating awareness among the women in general of the middle-class and upper-middle-class, but belatedly made a real breakthrough. And thus it worked its way gradually into the innermost recesses of the existing political fabric. Since then they have been desperately attempting to build a new identity or self notion that is absolutely independent from the one that has been imposed by tradition. The position of women in India today has to be seen in the light of the women's movement from Independence to the present. Certainly the many groups and ideas which have emerged in India since independence will be included.

Serrano Munoz, Raisa. (2022). The post-independence period of the subcontinent started with the end of British colonization and the division of India into Pakistan. The new Indian government had to deal with sectarian conflicts, huge migration from Pakistan and violence against women and individuals on the basis of caste. The post-independence period saw the public pushing social activists to evolve, resulting in the third phase of the Women's Movement. The essay discusses the role of public activists who battled for social justice in India after independence (after 1947) and the emergence of the third phase of the Women's Movement.

Kumar Hemant (2022). The proposed paper will focus on the historical and contemporary struggles and movements of women in India. As a direct result of the women's movements, women are now highly visible in political discourse. The women's movement was making strides forward at the same time as the struggle for national emancipation, due to the fact that the donation. Thanks to the contributions women made to the independence fight, equal rights and adult suffrage were guaranteed in the constitution. Having said that, these

constitutional safeguards have not brought about substantial social or material improvement for the bulk of Indian women's lives. Patriarchy and gender inequality are the root causes of the women's movement. So, ending patriarchy and gender injustice in all its forms—at home and abroad—was the primary goal of the women's movement. Patriarchy persists in India despite numerous women's movements, which is a tragic reality. The goal of this research is to investigate and analyze the many causes of the Indian women's movement and its subsequent growth and development. Images of 'sati' and stories of mass murder depict Indian women as a backward and oppressed group. However, reform initiatives in India occurred frequently throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. All things considered, contemporary women have deep roots in this past. This article will show how the Indian women's movement has evolved from its pre-independence and post-independence forms into its modern iteration.

Bhat, Rouf & Wani, Mohd. (2022). This study aims to examine the history of the Indian women's movement, as well as its accomplishments both prior to and following independence. Numerous reform initiatives in India have focused on improving women's welfare. In the years leading up to India's independence, many of the groups that worked to improve women's lives and improve society were also part of the independence movement. In India, the women's movement of the nineteenth century gained momentum as a subset of the larger social reform movement. A plethora of women's issues have thus been elevated to the forefront, thanks to the freedom movement of the twentieth century and the women's rights movement of the subsequent decades. What followed, such as the 1974 Towards Equality Report from the Committee on the Status of Women and the constitutional guarantee of gender equality, undoubtedly elevated women's concerns to a certain degree. The organizations that spearheaded the fight for women's rights and equality are fully responsible for all of these accomplishments. This study also examines the efforts of women's groups in India before and after independence, focusing on the aforementioned backdrop, to promote gender equality and justice.

Bhat Rashid Manzoor (2022). Several reform attempts in India have been geared towards the betterment of women's welfare. Many of the groups that campaigned to improve women's lives and improve society in the years leading up to India's independence also were part of the independence struggle. In India, the women's movement of the 19th century developed as a part of the greater social reform movement. The twentieth-century freedom struggle and the women's rights movement in the decades that followed have therefore made a host of women's issues prominent. What followed, for example, the 1974 Towards Equality Report from the Committee on the Status of Women and the constitutional guarantee of gender equality, surely brought women's concerns to some extent. These achievements are all due to the work of the organisations that spearheaded the battle for women's rights and equality. In the context of the above, the study also looks into the efforts of women's groups in India, pre- and post-independence, for gender equality and justice.

Mandal Prabhanjan and Sharma Havendra Kumar (2022). With independence in 1947, women's movements have played an important role in altering the social, economic and political status of women. This essay covers the rise of women's movements in post-independence India, pointing to major milestones, landmark struggles and their impact on the evolving position of women. The study seeks to chart the relationship between individual empowerment and communal action through legislative milestones, grassroots mobilisations and current challenges. The results reveal that while significant advances have been made in the legal and educational spheres, lasting sociocultural impediments still impede the achievement of total gender equality. The end of the report emphasises the need for further action and new policies to address emerging issues in the twenty-first century.

Jaishree (2022). The participation of women will be incomplete if the history of the Indian freedom war is not highlighted. Every other thing will be subjected to the sacrifice of Indian women. Stories of women's bravery, loyalty and sacrifice during the war for independence abound. Many of us don't know that hundreds of women fought with the men. They fought with real zest and unfaltering courage." Indian women broke free from many limitations and traditional duties concentrated on the home. Everybody speaks of the important role performed by the male liberation warriors. But the success of an independent India is a pipe dream without female liberation fighters. Few people know how certain people became outstanding leaders in the struggle to free themselves from being second-class citizens, victims of spousal abuse, members of an illiterate population and practitioners of the sati system. Indian women have played a significant role in this trajectory from taking part in the 1857 revolt through to the Gandhian era, conducting satyagraha, advocating for Khadi and picketing liquor stores. Some of the important women who played an instrumental role in liberating India from British rule are Usha Mehta, Rajkumari Gupta, Aruna Asaf Ali, Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi, Rani Gaidinliu, Amal Prabha Das, Azizam Bai, Gulan Kaur and Sarojini Naidu. They have rendered a great and honourable service to the freedom cause as a whole.

Sharma Gaurav, Khandelwal Jayanti Lal (2022). It would be remiss of historians to omit women's roles in the Indian freedom movement. At the forefront will be the sacrifices made by the women of India newline. The heroic deeds, selflessness, and bravery of women are interwoven throughout the history of the fight for freedom. Although many of us are unaware of it, hundreds of women fought alongside men. They fought fearlessly

and with genuine passion. Indian women liberated themselves from societal norms and duties, particularly those pertaining to the home. The amazing and commendable participation of women in the independence struggle and National awakening is, therefore, emphasised. Fighting as warriors in a culture where men predominate is not an easy task, though. In spite of women's best efforts, some traditionalists still hold the view that women should stay at home and take care of the house. Plus, women fight against these problems and also give their lives for them. One such woman who battled against British control against overwhelming difficulties was Rani Laxmi Bai; this article is entitled to showcase the legacy of women in history by demonstrating their fiery nature.

Parr R. (2021) . This study explores decolonisation processes on a global scale through looking at how Indian women interacted with global governance during the 'crisis of empire' between the wars. This distinctive movement articulated anti-colonial objectives through engagements with international social workers, the League of Nations' social work and transnational civil society networks. This established the foundation for future UN events, undermined the legitimacy of imperialism, and altered the rules of liberal internationalism.

Bora Ripunjoy (2019) .The women's movement in India emerged in the nineteenth century as a social reform movement and continued through the freedom fight, nationalist era, and into the democratic environment that India gained after independence. Despite the constitutional promise of equal rights for women, the feminist goals in India were not entirely achieved, which gave the Indian women's movement additional vigor. The aspiration for women's emancipation is being realized through the emergence of new organizations and groups, as well as new agitations and campaigns. In light of this history, this study seeks to analyze the women's movement from multiple angles and trace the changes it underwent after independence.

Gull Raashida, Aneesa Shafi (2014). With the advent of nationalism and the freedom movement, the Indian women's movement grew out of the social reform movement of the nineteenth century and moved into the democratic era that India achieved with its independence. Without the full realization of women's equal rights, the constitutional promise cannot be enforced. India's feminist movement is gathering steam, driven by new feminist goals. In order to achieve the goal of women's emancipation, a new women's movement is taking shape through the formation of different organizations and groups, and through various agitations and campaigns. In this paper, we shall discuss the women's movement and its various dimensions in an attempt to understand the changes it underwent after independence. With the rise of the feminist movement new discussions and problems have appeared. This paper attempts to make a portrait of the impact of these conversations and themes on the women's question in India.

Dwijendra Nath Thakur (2012). In politics, culture, or the economy, feminism can mean any movement that seeks to guarantee women's equality and safety under the law. A wide range of philosophical, cultural, sociological, and political frameworks that address gender inequality make up feminism. In addition to promoting gender parity, this movement fights for the rights and interests of women. Maggie Humm¹ and Rebecca Walker² state that there have been three distinct periods in feminism's history. There was a feminist uprising in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, another in the '60s and '70s, and the current wave began in the '90s. From these feminist uprisings, feminist thought developed. It shows up in many fields, including feminist history, literary criticism, and geography. Feminism in India was conceptualized differently from its Western counterparts, according to research on pre-colonial social systems and women's roles within them. Instead of feminism alone, political theory took the shape of nationalism as a result of social reform movements' rebuilding of Indian women as the pinnacle of "Indian culture" and the colonial essentialization of that culture. Many issues persist, however, and even "on-paper" improvements do not enable the full utilization of these new rights and opportunities. For instance, women are deemed a "weaker section" of the population in India's constitution, which means they require support in order to act as equals. This study examines the history of feminism, feminist movements, and women's rights in India through the lens of Indian society and the legal protections afforded to Indian women.

Raju, S. (1997). Several important topics concerning gender and women in India after 1947 are discussed in this paper. To better understand what happened after independence, it is helpful to first examine how colonial and anticolonial forces constructed "women" in the years leading up to it. Given the complexity and interconnectedness of the issues, one may argue that conventional feminism in India requires a much broader definition to encompass the many facets of the movement and the crucial role that women play in bringing about social change. In light of the prevalent misconception that the Shahada, anti-arrack, and Chipko movements were or are women's movements, the author presents illustrative case studies on Indian women fighting for equality. Next, we'll look at how women have been framed as an issue by different Indian plans, and how discussing women's difficulties is frequently couched in terms of the state's aim to regulate female bodies for the sake of population control. Here, we keep things sharp by combining a story of Indian planning centered on "women" with various comments on (and derived from) feminisms in the West and elsewhere.

III. CONCLUSION

Since 1947, India's women's movement has grown from welfare-focused to a comprehensive fight for equality, justice, and empowerment. Women have championed social justice, legal change, education, political involvement, and economic independence for 75 years. The literature shows that government institutions, civil society organisations, grassroots groups, and women's collectives have shaped the movement in response to changing political, economic, and cultural settings.

The study shows that Eastern Indian women's movements originated in distinct geographical contexts with different ethnicities, languages, tribal identities, socio-economic conditions, and political histories. Women in West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam, and the Northeast have contributed to social reform, environmental movements, labour rights, peacebuilding, education, and community development. Women's engagement in local governance, financial inclusion, and access to education, healthcare, and livelihoods has been greatly improved by grassroots, self-help, and non-governmental organisations.

The research also shows that constitutional safeguards, progressive legislation, judicial interventions, and government programs have greatly improved women's standing. New empowerment options have arisen from education, political reservation in local self-government, domestic violence protection, workplace sexual harassment prevention, and women's entrepreneurship. However, major issues remain. Gender-based violence, human trafficking, wage inequality, unequal access to property and productive resources, informal labour sector discrimination, health disparities, and the intersection of gender with caste, class, religion, disability, and tribal identity continue to hinder substantive equality.

From 2000 to 2022, digital technologies and social media transformed women's activism. Online campaigning, legal advocacy, and public awareness increased women's movement membership and youth participation. These advancements have raised cyber abuse, misinformation, digital exclusion, and privacy issues, emphasising the need for improved institutional safeguards and digital literacy.

This review shows that the women's movement has promoted gender justice and democracy in post-independence India. Progress has been made, but sustainable and inclusive empowerment requires policy backing, law enforcement, excellent education, economic opportunity, gender-sensitive governance, and community participation. In Eastern India, regional disparities, grassroots institutions, healthcare and education access, violence and trafficking prevention, and marginalised and tribal women's leadership should be prioritised.

Intersectional gender methods, comparative assessments between states, the effects of internet activism, climate change, and migration on women, and government and community-based policies' long-term effects should be studied. Such a study will help shape evidence-based policies that promote equality, dignity, and inclusive development by understanding women's movements' shifting character. The women's movement must continue to advance to achieve the constitutional objectives of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity and sustainable and equitable national development.

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