

WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN INDIA: TRAJECTORY OF ORGANISATION, IDEOLOGY AND STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT

Indian society started to respond to the characteristic challenges of the West gradually from the dawn of the 19th century. The influence of Western culture, ideology and religion produced several social reform movements. Social reform became the first popular issue among Indian intellectuals who, inspired by the liberal views of social change and in the hope of preventing social abuses, were to launch movements more particularly for women. An insight into the role of women's movement is crucial in the current scenario. Women's organisations should mobilize public opinion and strengthen social efforts against oppressive institutions and age old beliefs. It is essential to understand in detail the new women's movements which are manifestations of pluralistic paradigm of development and democracy. The struggle for women's rights will certainly become more intense in the coming decades. In view of this fact, a galaxy of women had boldly participated in the past in the struggle for women's emancipation. There is a qualitative difference and strategic variations between the present women's struggle and earlier liberation movements against oppression. This article focuses on the women's movement and its role in India with special focus on Tamil Nadu. It describes the developmental activities of women at the regional, national and local levels, outlining why the overall development scenario should include women's activism and organizing skills. It also reviews the nature and working of women's organisations, as a lens to the Indian women's movement.

Keywords: women's movement, organization, ideology, strategy

Genesis of Women's Organisations

Movements of reform against the social evils began in India in the early 19th century. They have usually been attributed to external factors being the impact of western education, missionary activities and promotion of nuclear and monogamous family and liberal ideas of the west. British and Indian reformers in the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century addressed several issues pertaining to women. Most important were the campaigns against sati, polygamy and child marriage and the agitation in favour of widow's remarriage and education for women. In the late 19th century, a new spirit had characterized a new social reform movement and the issue of women's status had become entangled with intra elite competition in Madras and Bombay presidencies. Early reformers like Ram Mohan Roy and Eshwara Chandra Vidhyasagar were actuated mainly by the philanthropic motive and their object was to bring certain individuals who were suffering under social laws. But with the awakening of natural consciousness, another and perhaps a strong motive of national efficiency came into play. It is realized that the disabilities of the individuals do not affect them alone, but their influence penetrates much farther and weakened and undermined the social fabric. At this juncture, M.G Ranade, an eminent leader of moderate faction, (influenced by the

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Malabari's proposal of National Association for Social Reform) wanted to form an organisation of All – India, base to give a definite shape to the Social Reform movement.

In the early 1880s the social reformers of Madras, inspired by the political leaders, tried to have a closer contact with like- minded people in other parts of South India¹. The new urge was activated when a political conference of that kind was held in Madras during 1884. Accordingly, a South Indian Conference was convened as Hindu Women's Remarriage Association on 31st December 1884 but the participation was restricted to graduates presumably with a view to enlist the support of the educated young men in the cause of social reform². The Indian National Congress inspired the reformers like Rangunathan Rao and M.G Ranade who wished to discuss the social issues at the congress. When the leaders of Indian National Congress decided to eliminate the social issues from their agenda in 1886 at Calcutta session, M.G Ranade and Rangunatha Rao formed the National Social Conference (NSC) in 1887 in Madras to provide an All – India forum for discussion of social reforms³. The National social conferences induced the spirit of nationalising the social problems and paved the way for the birth of many social reform organisations all over India, though of regional nature, particularly in Tamilnadu.

During this period, the Bharath Dharma Maha Mandali was founded in 1890 in Punjab by Pandit Din Dayal Sharma to counter the teachings of Arya Samaj. In 1895, the Sanadhan Dharma Sabha was founded in Haridwar, the Dharma Maha Parishad in South India and Dharma Mahamandali in Bengal to defend orthodox Hinduism. In 1902 these various bodies were united under a single organisation called Bharath Dharma Mahamandali, with its headquarters at Varanasi⁴. This organisation highly affected the status of women since it insisted on the orthodox customs of Hindus which was unfavourable to the emerging pattern of liberalised atmosphere for women. During the same period, two reform associations functioned in Madras. In 1892, the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association was founded by Viresalingam Pantulu, whose efforts were mainly concerned with the plight of widows. This Association fought for the liberation of women from the traditional Hindu customs which degraded women⁵. Simultaneously R.Venkat Ratnam Naidu started Social Purity Movement advocating temperance and combating the Devadasi customs. A similar organisation, the Madras Hindu Association was founded by Mrs. Annie Besant in 1904, to promote Hindu social and religious customs on national lines with the spirit of Hindu civilization. The Seva Sadan was another social reform and humanitarian organisation founded in 1885 by the famous Parsi social reformer Behramji M.Malabari, relentlessly fought throughout his life against child marriage and 'enforced widowhood'⁶. This organisation had branches all over India specialised in the care of socially discarded and exploited women of all castes, providing education, welfare and medical services.

Hence, variety of social reform movements throughout India and Tamilnadu in particular, devoted to the cause of elevation of the position of women, infused new ideas in the minds of the people with great enthusiasm, which subsequently resulted in the emergence of new women's groups in Tamilnadu. In the beginning of the 20th century the progress of western education and the growth of national consciousness and social awakening developed a new climate in favour of women in Madras Presidency. The new womanhood which emerged during this period reflected in women's participation in the National Movement, who also played an important role in the great social and political transformation.

In Tamilnadu, the scope and structure of the women's movement is as diverse as their activities but they strive to achieve a common goal on the upliftment and development of women despite their efforts through education, research and training programmes or through counseling, awareness generation activities and a wide range of their services and programmes. In terms of coverage, their activities range from the grass – root level to the national level. They also differ as activist groups, policy making bodies, research organisations and professionals Associations. Their target groups may vary from rural to urban women, housewives to working women, illiterates to urban educated middle class women and from self – employed poor women to highly placed women entrepreneurs.

Although different categorization of these women's organisations are possible based on their size, coverage, activities and methodology, they have been broadly grouped as follows:-

- Social Reform oriented organisations
- Social work oriented organisations
- Government / Political party oriented organisations
- Professional women's organisations
- Groups involved in research and documentation of women's issues
- Non-Governmental organisations

Social Reform oriented organisations

These organisations which are highly social reform oriented aimed at reforming the society by involving themselves in social activities for the rehabilitation of women besides creating awareness of their fundamental rights and responsibilities. Few such organisations in Tamilnadu were Women Indian Association (WIA), All India's Women Conference (AIWC), Joint Action Council for Women (JACW), Kaingkarya, Forum for Women's Rights and Development (FORWORD), Centre for Women's Development and Research organisation, Women's Collective, etc.,

The credit of establishing the first women organisation of all India character goes to Irish Lady Dorothy Jeenarajadasa and Margaret cousins along with Annie Besant, who laid the foundation for Women's Indian Association on 8th May 1917 at Madras⁷. This was the first organisation in India to make a demand for women's franchise and succeeded in its mission. The official journal of this association "Shri Dharma" carried authentic news of the progress of Indian women's movement in India and around the world. Since its foundation in 1917, **Women Indian Association (WIA)** played a significant role in the emancipation of women. The WIA adopted a strategy of organizing campaigns to raise their voice against inequality, patriarchal supremacy and non - egalitarian social structure. Further, it organized camps like orientation, training, legal awareness and environmental awareness in order to orient women in all fields. Pertaining to literacy programmes, the organisation succeeded in conducting total literacy campaign, tuition centres, adult education-Jana Siksha Nilayam and Non Formal education programmes. It expressed satisfaction on the passing of Child Marriage Restraint Act and Sarada Act against child marriage. Besides, it emphasized the introduction of compulsory primary education for girls and was responsible for the abolition of devadasi system and suppression of immoral traffic in women⁸.

The WIA became the parent of the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) which was organized in 1927. It was founded as an educational conference, but from its first session, it focused on both social and educational questions. In the post Independence period the UNO gave the **All India Women Conference** (AIWC) a consultative status to ascertain the Indian opinion on worldwide women's issues. Its main objective was to work for the society based on the principles of social justice, integrity, equal rights and opportunities for all. It played an active role in initiating and campaigning for the social legislation such as Sarada Act (1929), Special Marriage Act (1954), Hindu Marriage and Divorce Act (1955), Hindu Minorities and Guardianship Act (1956), Suppression of Immoral Traffic among Women and Girls Act (1956), Dowry Prohibition Act (1961) etc⁹. With the passage of time, AIWC has diversified its activities and programmes which include projects for the eradication of illiteracy, family planning, child welfare, vocational training for women, free legal-aid to women in distress and other socio-economic measures. It aims at the upliftment of under privileged sections of the society.

Joint Action Council for Women (JACW) came into existence to support, uphold and protect the interests, status and dignity of women. A politically non-aligned, non-sectarian feminist association, it was formed as a spontaneous response to a call for combined action by women activists and groups. To establish a forum where different women's organisations could send their representatives, to co-ordinate activities concerning women, the idea of a common platform for women's organisations was conceived at a workshop held in March 1982, arranged by the United States Information Centre in Madras along with the Madras Branch of the International Zonta Club for Women under the chairmanship of well-known activist and writer Veena Mazumdar of Delhi and was named as Joint Action Council for Women. Around 30 Women's Organisations from Tamilnadu participated in the workshop. It was formally registered on July 14, 1983, functioning until then as an ad-hoc committee. It is working towards securing just rights and equal opportunities for women, a centre for counselling women in distress and in need of assistance and striving for the economic and social development of women through various projects¹⁰. During 1983-1990 JACW established six Sahodari centres, of which two were in Chennai-at YWCA and Andhra Mahila Sabha and one each at Tirunelveli, Salem, Ooty and Kumbakonam. The Ashraya Integrated Shelter project was established in 1985 as a short stay home or crisis centre for women, at the premises of a welfare organisation, Andhra Mahila Sabha.

Kaingkarya (meaning *noble deed* in Sanskrit) was the brainchild of Kaveri Natarajan, a service-minded teacher and came into being in 1991 with a view to serve the two most vulnerable sections of society-women and children. Kaingkarya primarily works with the needy at Thirusoolam, Chennai. The organisation's maiden initiative 'Project Vazhikatti: empowerment through education' was launched in 1992¹². It conducted an AIDS awareness programme, with domestic help for marginalized sections as the primary target. **Forum for Women's Rights and Development**, (FORWORD) came into existence in 1992 to help battered and deprived women who live emotionally, socially, educationally and most importantly, economically insecure lives. Motto of FORWORD is to reach the oppressed women primarily through awareness and education programmes¹³. Apart from counseling programmes and advocacy, regular seminars and workshops on domestic violence are conducted.

Centre for Women's Development and Research organisation was started in 1993 as a platform to help and redress the problems of poor women. The organisation's initiatives through 'Manushi' and

'Snehidhi' revolve around female domestic workers and adolescent girls living in slums¹⁴. The programmes offer counseling, leadership training and awareness of gender issues, education and training in life skills. **Women's Collective** is the outcome of the collective efforts of six organisations in Tamilnadu headed by women. The Collective is facilitated by Ms. Sheela through Tamilnadu Resource Team and was started way back in 1994. Women's Collective organizes people at village level into small self help groups with an average membership of 12 and functions as SHGs helping the members to deal with their personal, family and community issues¹⁵.

These organisations which are highly social reform oriented aimed at reforming the society by involving themselves in social activities for the rehabilitation of women besides creating awareness of their fundamental rights and responsibilities. In this category, these organisations have contributed for improving socio-economic conditions of women on one hand and on the other, in the overall task of rural development. This is evident from the fact that the activities were invariably oriented towards social welfare programmes.

Social work oriented organisations

The second category propagates for the betterment of women, working over wider areas where women are accessed to involve actively in the programme of action. The social work oriented organisations aim at catalyzing the women towards development approach to build new models focusing with new programmes and represent needs and aspirations of women.

There are nearly 120 social work women's organisations in Tamilnadu. Among which, special mention should be made about Andhra Mahila Sabha (AMS), Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Family Planning Association of India (FPA), Women's Voluntary Service of Tamilnadu (WVS), Pennurimai Iyakkam (PI), Centre for Development and Women's Studies (CEDAW), Feminist Association for Social Action (FASA), International Foundation for Crime Prevention and Victim Care (PCVC), etc

Andhra Mahila Sabha (AMS) is an institution dedicated towards working for the empowerment of women. In 1938 Durgabai Deshmukh started the Andhra Mahila Sabha. The vision of this organisation is "Empowering the women" and the motto is to promote the education of women, to propagate traditional values, to uphold the dignity of women, to empower them and to train women to be efficient workers and also to harness their services in building up the future of the nation in general and women in particular¹⁶.

Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), movement founded in England, owes its origin to two different groups. The first group in Madras was founded in 1884, eight years before it was actually called the Young Women Christian Association. This group called the Madras Christian Women's Association was organized shortly after a missionary conference in Calcutta (now Kolkata) in 1890¹⁷. The present YWCA was established in 1892 by the effort of Emily Kinnaird at Madras (now Chennai). Sahodari project, distressed women were given counseling or legal aid. The YWCA played a remarkable role through the activities of Sahodari and the main aim was to give women food and shelter and to offer them vocational training¹⁸. They dedicated Navajeevan project to the care of mentally ill women, providing them occupational rehabilitative therapy. Other projects like community college, Old age home, Nursery and balwadi, rural development project aims to develop

and empower women. The YWCA with its motto “By love serve one another” endeavours to promote the full development of women irrespective of their religion or creed¹⁹.

Family Planning Association of India (FPA) established in 1949, broadly work towards creating awareness among people on sexual and reproductive health, family planning and HIV/AIDS. It endeavours to promote sexual and reproductive health, especially among the marginalised sections of society²⁰. **Women’s Voluntary Service of Tamilnadu (WVS)** is a voluntary, non-profit, non-sectarian organisation established in May 1972 at Raj Bhavan, Madras with a view to bring all women social workers under one forum and organise measures for the amelioration of the living conditions especially of the weaker and under privileged sections of the society²¹

Pennurimai Iyakkam (PI) which was established in 1979 aims at organizing campaigns and meetings to mobilize poor women in providing support and shelter²². They take up issues such as violence in marriage and dowry harassment and take on to the streets to infuse thought and bring to the fore problems that warrant immediate attention. The Pennurimai Iyakkam uses techniques like street plays, skits on burning issues, feminist song, posters, exhibitions etc. It is publishing a journal by name ‘Pennurimai Kural’ (Voice of Women’s Right) to implement the ideologies. **Centre for Development and Women’s Studies (CEDAW)** which was established in Chennai in 1988²³, is highly identical with the Pennurimai Iyakkam, Positive women’s network in raising consciousness, general issues affecting women and fighting the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS – are the areas of concern for CEDAW. Demonstrations and rallies are yet another medium of expressing dissent and calling for a thorough transformation.

Feminist Association for Social Action (FASA) started in 1989 led the way in Chennai in dissemination of information on sexual harassment and domestic violence and broke new grounds through its relentless pursuit for laws to counter gender discrimination²⁴. FASA’s primary objective was to counter different forms of gender discrimination and spread awareness on gender issues. **International Foundation for Crime Prevention and Victim Care (PCVC)**, created in 2001 in Chennai with the sole aim of countering domestic violence and providing a range of services for victims. The PCVC’s initiatives and services fall under broad categories – crisis intervention and prevention. They include the following: *Shanthi* – crisis intervention centre for domestic violence victims, *Astitva* – emergency shelter for women and children, *Udhayam* – community support unit working in tandem with all-women police stations, *Vidiyal* – project for burn survivors of domestic violence²⁵.

The Social Reform oriented organisations believe in fighting against all forms of sexual oppression and believe in transcending the existing social order. These organisations are identical in views which expressed the need to look more deeply into the issues of gender identity (ie) the subordination and oppression of women in the family with special focus on dowry murders, sexual exploitation and women’s role in the decision making process in the family etc., In this process, they insist on self reliance in order to elevate the economic status of women through equal employment opportunities in both organized and unorganized sectors.

Government / political party organisations

They are formed to identify, recruit, train, endorse and support women seeking public office. These organisations help women candidates run successful campaigns, hold workshops and developing a platform in motivating volunteers. The social welfare department of the government directs its attention to the implementation of welfare programmes for women. While on one hand the government aided voluntary organisations, conduct many programmes and execute various measures to promote the cause of women, on the other, the political party oriented women's wings act as catalyst not only to enhance women's interest in politics but also to seek their support for membership in the party.

The Tamilnadu Social Welfare Board which was constituted in 1954 has been working for the upliftment of people living below poverty line through the voluntary institutions in the State with the assistance of the Central Social Welfare Board. Women's Welfare Department was established by Government of Tamilnadu in 1947²⁶. It provides support to Voluntary Organisations through a variety of programmes to facilitate the empowerment of women through education, training, collective mobilization, awareness creation and also through income generating activities and provision of support services. With the help of funds received from the Central Social Welfare Board, the Tamilnadu Social Welfare Board assists voluntary organisations on a large scale which serves children, women and handicapped and implements welfare schemes²⁷.

During the post Independence era, women are increasingly taking interest in political issues and activities. There is a greater awareness among women on the power and right of franchise given to them. Hence the political parties of Tamilnadu such as DMK, AIADMK, Congress (I), CPI (M) MDMK, PMK, DMDMK constituted their women's wing with a view to executing their ideology and also to enhance the women membership of their parties.

The Indian National Congress (I) party had firmly entrenched itself in the politics of the nation and of state for more than 50 years. The Mahila Congress or Women's wing of this party was constituted soon after its foundation in 1885²⁸. There were lot of women freedom fighters who took active role in the activities of the party. Next to Congress (I) party, the most dominant party in the political scene of Tamilnadu is the DMK (an offshoot of Justice Party and Dravidar Kazhagam) which constituted its women's forum in the name of 'Magalir Mandram' on 21.8.1956²⁹. The social and cultural ideologies of EV Ramasamy better known as Periyar and his self respect movement influenced the members of the women's wing of this party.

The ideologies of Karl Marx laid the foundation for the Communist Party which was split into two and the off – shoot was called as CPI (M) in 1964. The party played a vital role in the emancipation of women resulting in the formation of All India Democratic Women's Association (Jananayaga Madhar Sangam) on 09.12.1973³⁰. AIDWA works to mobilise women across levels, from the remotest districts to the urban heartland. Demonstrations are AIDWA's most potent method of effecting change. Members take to the streets in large numbers protesting against discriminatory measures or laws, domestic violence, dowry harassment and other issues concerning women. AIDWA's legal aid

centre first attempts to find solution to women's problems by counseling parties involved in the dispute and effect reconciliation³¹.

AIADMK which was formed in the year 1972 constituted its women's wing in the same year³². Though the party ascertains some moderate approach for the women's problem, it did not have any basic character in the mobilisation of women in the field of politics. Besides the above mentioned major political parties, the other developing parties in Tamilnadu are Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) founded by Ramadoss in 1989, Marumalarchi Dravidaa Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK) which split from DMK under the leadership of V.Gopalasamy, Desiya Murpokku Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMDMK) (Formed in September 2005) of Vijayakanth also formed their women's wing to gain popularity among women and also to support the women activist groups.

Women's fronts of various political parties focus their activities on electoral victory. During the International Women's Decade, all political parties in Tamilnadu have shown greater interest in women's problems. In order to promote and enhance the interests of women and also to increase their representation in politics, they instigated their women's wing towards the same. The Political parties in Tamilnadu are by and large reluctant to place women in higher positions. Most of these women's wings were created with an ulterior motive only to gain support and popularity among women. However the ideologies of different Women's Movements and Government Political party oriented organisations reveal the fact that they, no doubt, display on the streets for highlighting women's oppression. There is a lot of unevenness in the extent of the activities, programmes, strength of leadership, societal response, level of consciousness etc., in various parts of the state because of the varied cultural differences.

Groups involved in research and documentation of women's issues

The recently emerging women's organisations involve themselves in research and documentation of women's issues. They have attempted to resolve issues of cultural – traditional - patriarchal origin, which has given women a subordinate status in society. They are involved in diverse activities ranging from activism to research and documentation and claim to subscribe to certain ideals such as equity, conservation, gender sensitivity and other related issues. Initiatives: Women in Development (IWID) and Tamilnadu Social Watch (TNSW) are the two important examples for this category.

IWID is an initiative formed in 1989 by a group of women activists from different regions of India who work to promote the development of women and marginalized with in NGOs in larger society. Key focus of IWID is to collect, compile, critically analyse and disseminate issue based information gathered from widest possible range of materials, including periodicals, unpublished and published articles, reports, papers, books, films, posters, and other documents produced by different groups at the state, national and international levels on a variety of topics related to Gender and Development³³. **Tamilnadu Social Watch (TNSW)** came into existence to share a common platform with the aim of materializing aspirations of the people, more particularly women in the state. It is actively engaged in monitoring the performances of the institutions of governance in the state. TNSW through its research and advocacy creates an enabling environment for citizens and the government to identify the hindrances and remove the same so that the latter meets the expectations of the former³⁴

Professional women's organisations

The organisations which identify promotional strategies for the protection of women through concrete efforts are referred to as professional women's organisations. They aim to eradicate poverty of women and also increase their economic position integrating them in all sectors of social and economic policy. Following are some of the organisations working with the above objective.

Working Women's Forum (WWF) was started in 1978 as a responsive organisation, working for the rights of poor women and facilitating access to credit, education, healthcare and other fundamental services. It works with 14 branches in urban, semi-urban and rural areas across Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. WWF is essentially a movement of grassroot women, an initiative covering poor rural and urban working class women in three Southern States. WWF has promoted two subsidiary institutions to work towards empowering poor women: The Indian Cooperative Network for Women (ICNW) and The National Union of Working Women. WWF's pioneering initiatives is micro insurance. Social security coverage for members is provided through tie-ups with the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) and Royal Sundaram Alliance Pvt. Limited (RSA). Women are covered under life, accident, disability and health through the ICNW³⁵.

Marketing Organisation of Women Entrepreneurs (MOOWES), a pioneer in assisting women entrepreneur's market products, was the brainchild of Seetha Ranganathan and Janaki Ananth. It came into being in 1990 with initial assistance from Indian Bank. MOOWES in Chennai works to encourage women to set up their own manufacturing units or trade in products of their choice. MOOWES offers its members a platform to reach consumers primarily through participations in exhibitions or by conducting exhibition-cum-sale. Women receive training in jute making, food processing, tailoring and leather technology to name a few. In addition, MOOWES' annual feature 'Shakthi', an exposition comprising seminars, workshops and exhibition, is the largest stage for members to showcase their products as well as learn new skills³⁶.

FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO) is providing a platform for women to express their concerns and an opportunity to excel in their chosen business endeavours with its headquarters in Delhi. The Chennai Chapter, the first regional Chapter of FLO was set up in 1996. With 'power to empower' as their mission, FLO chapters in Coimbatore, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Kolkata and Mumbai serve as nodal centres and reach out to other areas of the country. FLO is determined to create a space to promote entrepreneurship and business acumen among women professionals. The only national-level trade organisation, serves as a forum for women to interact and share ideas and experiences³⁷.

Association for Non-Traditional Employment of Women (ANEW) started in 1997, provides free training for young women from underprivileged families and helps them to get access to practical job skills and self-sustaining employment. ANEW's projects can be divided into five broad categories: Housekeeping, Diploma in Computer Applications, Car driving, Autorickshaw driving, Home nursing. In addition to this they also offer counseling and self awareness classes for personality development³⁸. **Centre for Entrepreneurship Development (CED)** has undertaken a number of skilled training and entrepreneurship development activities for the benefits of women in 2001 at Madurai. They conducted a number of workshops/ seminars/ conferences at the regional and

national level on Women Empowerment in association with other developmental agencies with the support of Government agencies. CED has imparted Skilled Training to around 300 Self Help Group women in and around Madurai District on candle making, food processing – pickle and juice making, cleaning powder manufacturing, etc³⁹. **Women's Entrepreneurship Promotional Association (WEPA)** was set up in 2001, empowers women through Training, imparting information on health and hygiene, Vocational training, Exposure through seminars and workshops, exhibitions and guidance and consultancy services. Though WEPA is not part of the SHG movement, it provides vocational training to members of SHGs run by other non-governmental organisations. It networks with individuals and organisations to set up units for women entrepreneurs⁴⁰.

Conclusion

A.R. Desai has observed, "Indian women are developing a new sensitivity and consciousness which will no longer tolerate the suffocating financial, institutional, political and cultural norms which place them in a humiliating subject status". Women's movements in Tamilnadu during 20th century played a vital role in mobilizing the mass for women's rights. From the above analysis it is revealed that the social reform oriented organisations mobilise the mass for women's right against innumerable forms of women's oppression. They involved in social activities, organising campaigns against inequality, patriarchal supremacy and unequal social structure. Social work oriented organisations focus on issues like discrimination, harassment, economic inequality, etc. They organise protest rallies, street plays, awareness meetings, legal assistance, self-employment training for underprivileged women. Government/political party oriented organisation act as catalyst not only to enhance women's interest in politics and work for the political empowerment of women. Groups involved in research and documentation of women's issues attempt to resolve issues of cultural traditional - patriarchal origin, which has given women a subordinate status in society. Professional women's organisations aim to eradicate poverty of women and also increase their economic position integrating them in all sectors of social and economic policy.

To achieve Gender parity the women organisations

- Should motivate women to mobilize all resources from the grass root level to the national level to maximize their impact of their programmes.
- Mobilize public opinion and strengthen social efforts against oppressive institutions and age old beliefs.
- Work to transform existing gender discriminatory laws and procedures
- Transform the power relations in the family and other social institutions
- Can help bring about more equitable gender relations within the family and society
- Engage women at all levels to eradicate poverty, promote peace and achieve sustainable development proponents of their rights, healthy partnership between men and women

Women must develop the attributes of initiative, persistence and tenacity to deal with the local bureaucracy and mobilize other women. Government should frame comprehensive Gender Policy at the State and National level outlining the government's commitment to achieve Gender equality and gender justice. Organisations need to move away from the notion of women's development as a component, to women's development as a process to achieve and attain 'empowerment'. A

qualitative difference and strategic variations is required between the present women's struggle and earlier liberation movements against oppression.

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