Role of Women and Women Organization

Social construct of gender refers to the idea that gender unlike biological sex is not simply a natural or purely biological fact, but is largely shaped by social norms, cultural expectations, and historical contexts. It's about the roles, behaviors, attributes, and identities that societies attach to being "male" or "female" (and, in many cultures, beyond the binary).

Sex

- Biological differences between males and females (chromosomes, reproductive organs, hormones).
- Fixed at birth (though intersex conditions exist).

Gender

- Socially and culturally defined roles, norms, and expectations linked to being male, female, or another gender identity.
- Fluid and can vary across cultures, time periods, and individual identities.

Gender roles and identities are formed through:

- Socialization: From childhood, people are taught how to "behave" as boys or girls (e.g., toys, dress, speech).
- Institutions: Family, education, religion, and media reinforce gender norms.
- Language: Words and expressions often carry gendered meanings.
- Cultural practices: Traditions, rituals, and customs dictate "appropriate" gender behavior.
- Example: In many societies, caregiving is labeled as "women's work" and leadership as "men's work," though these tasks are not biologically determined.

Features of Gender as a Social Construct

- Varies across cultures – What is "masculine" in one culture can be "feminine" in another.
- Changes over time –For example, pink was once seen as a "boy's" color in the early 20th century.
- Linked to power structures – Patriarchal systems often privilege men's roles and perspectives.
- Enforced by sanctions – People who deviate from norms may face social disapproval.

Implications

- Shapes opportunities and access to resources (education, jobs, healthcare).
- Influences laws and policies (marriage, inheritance, labor rights).

- Creates gender inequalities (wage gaps, underrepresentation in politics).
- Affects identity and self-expression (transgender and non-binary experiences challenge rigid norms).

Indian Context

- Patriarchal traditions: Joint family structures, dowry, and inheritance laws have historically favored men.
- Gender roles in labor: Women concentrated in unpaid care work and informal sector.
- Media & cinema: Often reinforce stereotypes (women as caregivers, men as protectors).
- Recent changes: Legal reforms (e.g., criminalizing triple talaq, women in combat roles), feminist movements, and social media activism have challenged traditional constructs.

Status and Profile of women in India

- Ancient India – Women enjoyed relative equality in Vedic period; participation in education, religious rituals.
- Medieval period – Decline in status due to child marriage, purdah, sati, and restrictions on education.
- Colonial period – Social reform movements (Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Jyotirao Phule) challenged oppressive customs; women's education began to spread.
- Post-independence – Constitutional guarantees, legal reforms, and welfare policies aimed at equality.

Constitutional & Legal Status

Constitutional Provisions:

- Article 14 – Equality before law
- Article 15(1) – Prohibits discrimination based on sex
- Article 16 – Equal opportunity in public employment
- Article 39(d) – Equal pay for equal work
- Article 42 – Maternity relief
- Article 51A(e) – Renounce practices derogatory to women's dignity

Major Laws:

- Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 – Equal inheritance rights
- Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005
- Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013

- Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006

Socio-Economic Profile of women in India

Education:

- Literacy rate (NFHS-5, 2019–21): Women – \~71.5% vs Men – \~84.4%
- Gender gap narrowing but rural–urban disparity persists.

Health:

- Life expectancy: Women 70.7 years (2023 est.)
- Maternal Mortality Ratio (SRS 2020): 97 per 100,000 live births
- High anemia prevalence: 57% women (NFHS-5).

Workforce Participation:

- Female Labour Force Participation Rate (PLFS 2022–23): 37% (improved but still below global avg.)
- High share in informal and unpaid work.

Political Participation:

- 14.94% representation in Lok Sabha (2024)
- 33% reservation in Panchayati Raj institutions (many states see >40% women members).

Cultural & Social Status

- Persistent patriarchy: Preference for sons, restrictions on mobility, gendered division of labor.
- Changing trends: Urban educated women entering diverse professions; rise of women entrepreneurs.
- Challenges: Dowry harassment, gender-based violence, underrepresentation in STEM and leadership roles.

Key Challenges

- Gender-based violence (NCRB 2022: >4 lakh crimes against women reported)
- Skewed sex ratio at birth (SRB 929 girls per 1000 boys, NFHS-5)
- Low asset ownership (13% land ownership by women)
- Intersectional disadvantages for Dalit, Adivasi, and minority women.

Dimension	Progress	Challenges
Legal	Strong constitutional rights	Implementation gaps
Education	Rising literacy & enrolment	Rural & dropout issues
Health	Falling MMR, better life expectancy	Anemia, malnutrition
Economic	More self-employment & SHGs	Low formal sector jobs
Political	Panchayat reservation success	Low in higher politics

Achievements- Women leaders in high offices:

- President: Pratibha Patil, Droupadi Murmu
- Prime Minister: Indira Gandhi (1966–77, 1980–84)
- Speakers of Lok Sabha: Meira Kumar, Sumitra Mahajan
- Panchayati Raj has nurtured grassroots women leaders, many later entering state or national politics.
- Women-led movements influencing policy (e.g., Chipko Movement, anti-liquor campaigns, Narmada Bachao Andolan).

Challenges

- Underrepresentation in higher politics despite local-level successes.
- Patriarchal political culture – male dominance in party structures.
- Tokenism & proxy representation – male relatives controlling decision-making for elected women ("Sarpanch Pati" phenomenon).
- Violence & harassment in political spaces discouraging participation.
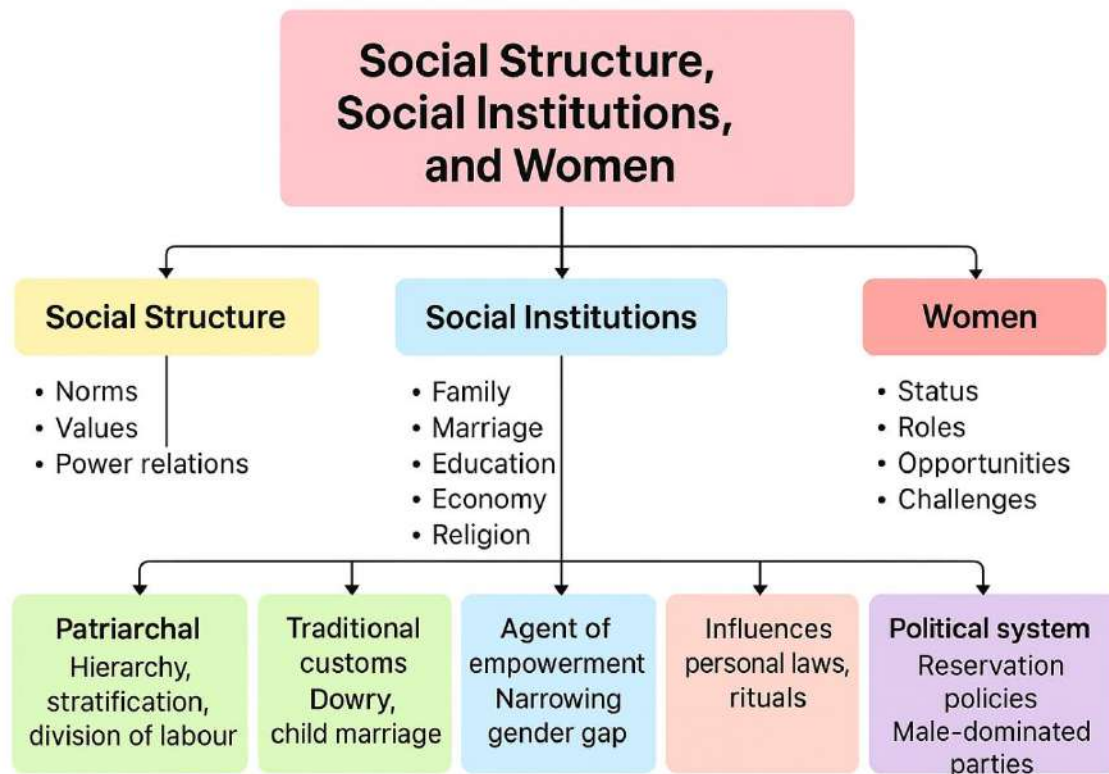- Financial barriers – lack of independent resources for election campaigns.

Government & Institutional Initiatives

- National Commission for Women (1992) – policy review, advocacy, grievance redressal.
- Training & capacity building for women in PRIs (Ministry of Panchayati Raj schemes).
- Electoral reforms to promote gender equity in candidacy (still debated).
- Digital platforms enabling women leaders to connect and share strategies.

Social Structure, Social Institutions, and Women

Social Structure- The patterned relationships, roles, and hierarchies that organize society. It determines women's position through norms, values, and power relations. In India, traditionally patriarchal:

- Hierarchy: Men in dominant roles; women subordinate in decision-making.
- Stratification: Class, caste, religion, and region intersect with gender.
- Division of labour: Productive (paid) work assigned to men, reproductive (unpaid domestic) work to women.

Social Structure, Social Institutions, and Women

Social Structure
- Norms
- Values
- Power relations

Social Institutions
- Family
- Marriage
- Education
- Economy
- Religion

Women
- Status
- Roles
- Opportunities
- Challenges

Patriarchal
Hierarchy, stratification, division of labour

Traditional customs
Dowry, child marriage

Agent of empowerment Narrowing gender gap

Influences personal laws, rituals

Political system Reservation policies Male-dominated parties

Social Institutions & Women

Social institutions are stable patterns of social behavior that fulfill essential functions. Each shapes women's status and opportunities.

Family

- Patrilineal & patrilocal norms dominate in India.
- Controls inheritance, property rights, and women's mobility.
- Reinforces gender roles from childhood (socialization).
- Recent change: Nuclear families, urbanization, and women's education enabling more autonomy.

Marriage

- Traditionally arranged; often linked to caste/community endogamy.
- Dowry system → economic burden & violence.
- Legal reforms (Hindu Marriage Act, 1955; Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006) seek equity.

Education

- Acts as an agent of empowerment.
- Past exclusion → now narrowing gender gap (NEP 2020 focus on girls' education).
- Still affected by rural–urban disparities and dropout due to early marriage or household duties.

Economy

- Women concentrated in informal sector and unpaid care work.
- Wage gap persists.
- Self-Help Groups (SHGs), microfinance improving economic participation.

Religion

- Influences personal laws, rituals, and moral codes for women.
- Reform movements & Supreme Court interventions challenging discriminatory practices (e.g., Sabarimala verdict, triple talaq ban).

Political System

- Representation shaped by reservation policies (73rd & 74th Amendments, Women's Reservation Bill).
- Parties still male-dominated in leadership structures.

Triple Talaq in India refers to the now-invalidated Islamic practice of talaq-e-biddat, where a Muslim husband could instantly divorce his wife by pronouncing the word "talaq" three times in one sitting (verbally, in writing, or even electronically).

Talaq-e-biddat: An instant and irreversible form of divorce, considered innovative (biddat) and not mentioned in the Quran, but historically practiced by some Hanafi Sunni Muslims.

Other Islamic divorce forms:

• Talaq-e-ahsan – most approved; one pronouncement followed by iddat period.
• Talaq-e-hasan– three pronouncements over three menstrual cycles.

Why Triple Talaq was Controversial

• Gender discriminatory – Allowed only to men, without wife's consent.
• Violation of equality – Claimed to violate Articles 14, 15, and 21 of the Indian Constitution.
• Instant & irrevocable – Left women without financial or social security.
• International stance – Banned in several Muslim-majority countries (e.g., Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia) long before India.

Legislation: Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019

• Declares instant triple talaq void and illegal.
• Criminalizes the practice – up to 3 years' imprisonment for the husband.
• Provides subsistence allowance and custody rights to the wife.
• Applies to all forms of instant triple talaq – oral, written, or electronic.
• Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939

Pros

• Promotes gender justice & equality.
• Prevents arbitrary divorce.
• Empowers Muslim women legally & socially.

Cons

• Criminalizing it may harm family reconciliation.
• Risk of misuse for harassment.
• Marriage is a civil contract in Islam; criminal punishment may be excessive.

Inter sectionality

- Caste + Gender: Dalit/Adivasi women face double discrimination.
- Class + Gender: Poor women have fewer resources for education/health.
- Religion + Gender: Customary laws affect property rights, mobility.

Challenges within Institutions

- Gender-based violence normalized in some family/community settings.
- Institutional bias in law enforcement, courts, workplaces.
- Cultural resistance to women in leadership roles.

Changing Trends

- Urbanization, media, legal reforms -more visibility of women in education, business, politics.
- Feminist movements & digital activism challenging stereotypes.
- Policy focus shifting from welfare to empowerment (e.g., Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Stand Up India).

Nature, range, and pattern of women's work

Nature of Women's Work Refers to the **type and characteristics of activities** performed by women.

- Productive work that produces goods/services and is counted in GDP. Farming, weaving, handicrafts, teaching, nursing.
- Reproductive work related to household maintenance, care, and family reproduction—unpaid and often invisible in statistics. Cooking, cleaning, childcare, eldercare.
- Formal sector work Wage/salary-based, secure, regulated jobs. Government service, corporate jobs
- Informal sector work Low-paid, unregulated, no social security. Domestic help, street vending, construction work.
- Subsistence work Activities for self/family consumption, not for sale in the market. Kitchen gardening, livestock care for home use.

Range of Women's Work Covers the **variety and scope of work** women are engaged in:

- Agriculture – Sowing, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, livestock care.
- Cottage & Handicrafts – Weaving, pottery, embroidery, basket-making.
- Industrial & Manufacturing – Garment factories, food processing, electronics assembly.
- Service Sector – Teachers, nurses, clerks, IT professionals, call centre workers.
- Entrepreneurship – Self-help groups (SHGs), micro-enterprises.

- Domestic Work – Paid domestic help, care giving jobs.
- Political & Administrative Roles – Panchayat members, political leaders, bureaucrats.

Pattern of Women's Work   Means distribution and trends of women's participation across sectors, regions, and time.

- Sectoral Majority in agriculture & informal sector; low share in high-skilled formal jobs.
- Rural–Urban Divide Rural women: mostly agricultural labour, animal husbandry, home-based work. Urban women: service sector, domestic help, small businesses.
- Wage Gap Women earn less than men for the same work, especially in informal jobs.
- Unpaid Work High proportion of unpaid household/care work; undervalued in economic statistics.
- Time Use Women's workdays are longer due to "double burden" – paid + unpaid work.
- Seasonal   In agriculture, women's work is seasonal (peak during sowing & harvest).
- Cultural & Social Norms Restrict mobility, occupational choice, and hours of work.
- Changing Trends Growth in women's education, IT jobs, self-employment; rise in political participation. |

The fall in **Female Labour Force Participation Rate** (FLFPR) in India is the result of structural, cultural, and economic factors interacting over time.

Even though India has made progress in education and health for women, their participation in paid work has dropped sharply — from around 32% in 2005 to around 23% in 2019 (World Bank data), before recovering slightly to 37% in 2022–23 (PLFS).

Economic Factors

- Jobless growth in female-friendly sectors
- Agriculture mechanization & shrinking rural farm work reduced women's jobs.
- Manufacturing sectors like textiles, garments, and food processing — which employ more women — have not expanded enough.
- Rise of capital-intensive industries
- Economic growth has been led by sectors (IT, construction, heavy manufacturing) where female participation is traditionally low.
- Lack of suitable part-time/flexible jobs
- Many women cannot take full-time jobs due to family duties.

Social & Cultural Norms

- Patriarchal attitudes discourage women from working, especially in rural and conservative regions.

- Household income effect: As family incomes rise, some households withdraw women from the workforce to signal higher social status.
- Marriage and motherhood: Early marriage and childbearing often end women's working life prematurely.

Education–Employment Mismatch

- More young women staying in education (which is good) → temporarily lowers participation.
- However, educated women face fewer suitable jobs matching their qualifications, leading to withdrawal from the labour market.

Safety & Infrastructure Issues

- Lack of safe transport and workplace harassment deter participation.
- Inadequate childcare facilities and maternity support.

Informal Sector Challenges

- Women are overrepresented in informal work (domestic help, home-based work) with low wages and no social security.
- These jobs are often undercounted in official statistics, making participation appear lower.

Women's movements in India

Women's movements in India have evolved over centuries, addressing social reform, independence, gender justice, and empowerment. They can be broadly classified into **four historical phases, each shaped by the socio-political context.

Types of Women's Movements in India

- Social reform   Abolition of sati, widow remarriage campaigns
- Political rights   Women's Indian Association, AIWC
- Labour rights   SEWA, women in informal sector unions
- Environmental   Chipko, Narmada Bachao Andolan
- Anti-violence   Anti-dowry protests, anti-rape campaigns
- Digital-age movement   #MeToo India, Pink Chaddi campaign

Important national women's organizations in India

1. National Commission for Women (NCW) Established: 1992 (under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990).Statutory body.

Objectives:

• Review constitutional and legal safeguards for women.
• Advise the government on policy matters affecting women.
• Take up cases of atrocities and discrimination.

Activities:

• Monitoring implementation of laws like the Dowry Prohibition Act, Domestic Violence Act.
• Conducting gender sensitisation programmes.
• Handling complaints and grievances.

2. Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) Established: 1953. Autonomous body under the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

Objectives:

• Support voluntary organisations working for women, children, and weaker sections.
• Promote welfare programmes and family counselling centres.

Activities:

• Grants-in-aid to NGOs.
• Programmes for destitute women, skill training, awareness camps.

3. All India Women's Conference (AIWC) Established: 1927. Voluntary organisation (pre-independence reformist movement).

Objectives:

• Promote women's education, social reform, and equality.
• Work for legislative reforms in favour of women.

Activities:

• Advocacy for women's suffrage, marriage reforms, property rights.
• Educational and vocational training centres.

4. National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) Established: 1954 (women's wing of CPI).Political-affiliated women's organisation.

Objectives:

• Mobilise women on socio-economic issues.
• Campaign for equal wages, maternity benefits, and gender equality.

Activities:

• Street protests, awareness campaigns.
• Work among rural women, labourers, and informal sector workers.

5. Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) Established: 1972, Ahmedabad (by Ela Bhatt). Trade union for women in informal sector.

Objectives:

• Organise women workers for full employment and self-reliance.

Activities:

• Microfinance, cooperative societies, skill training.
• Legal aid for women workers.

6. Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) of India Established: 1875. Faith-based voluntary organization.

Objectives:

• Empower women through education, skill development, and health services.

Activities:

• Shelters for women, vocational training.
• Health and community service projects.

7. Bharat Stree Mahamandal Established: 1910 (by Sarala Devi Chaudhurani). First women's organisation in India for social reform.

Objectives:

• Promote women's education and self-reliance.

Activities:

- Setting up schools for girls, literacy campaigns.

8. Mahila Arthik Vikas Mahamandal (MAVIM) Established: 1975 (Maharashtra state-level).

Objectives:

- Promote entrepreneurship and livelihood for women.

Activities:

- Microcredit, SHG formation, business training.

9. Indian Association for Women's Studies (IAWS) Established: 1982.

Objectives:

- Promote feminist research and gender studies.

Activities:

- Conferences, publications, policy advocacy.

Emergence of new women's organizations in India

After the 1970s, India saw a shift from welfare-based women's groups (focused mainly on education, family welfare, and charity) to activist and rights-based organizations. This was driven by:

- Global influences – UN International Women's Year (1975) and Decade for Women (1976–1985).
- Post-Emergency democratic activism (1977 onwards) – revival of grassroots movements.
- Recognition of women's issues beyond welfare – dowry deaths, workplace harassment, domestic violence, land rights.
- Rise of feminist consciousness – demand for structural change, not just charity.
- Inclusion of marginalized voices – Dalit, tribal, queer, rural, and informal sector women.

Characteristics of New Organizations

- Rights-based approach (legal reforms, gender justice) rather than only welfare.
- Decentralized, grassroots mobilization instead of only top-down leadership.
- Focus on intersectionality– caste, class, sexuality, disability.
- Networking with international feminist and human rights groups.

- Use of media and protest politics – rallies, sit-ins, public hearings.
- Engagement with the state – policy advocacy, PILs, law reform.

Examples of New Women's Organizations

- Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) 1972 Informal sector women workers |Microfinance, cooperatives, legal aid
- Joint Women's Programme (JWP) 1977 Networking of church-related women's groups |Domestic violence campaigns
- Women's Action Forum (India chapters) Late 1970s Feminist activism Protests against rape laws, dowry
- Saheli Women's Resource Centre (Delhi) 1981 Non-funded feminist collective Support for survivors of violence
- Vimochana (Bangalore) 1979 Violence against women Campaigns on dowry deaths
- AIDWA (All India Democratic Women's Association) 1981 Mass organisation (linked to CPI-M) Rural women, wage equality
- Jagori 1984 Feminist resource centre Street theatre, campaigns on harassment
- MSS (Mahila Samakhya Society) 1989 Govt.-NGO programme Empowerment through education in rural areas
- Snehalaya 1989 Women in sex work, HIV prevention Shelter homes, legal help
- Blank Noise Project 2003 Young feminist digital activism Campaigns against street harassment

New focus:

- Violence against women (dowry deaths, sexual assault, marital rape)
- Equal wages and work conditions
- Land and inheritance rights
- Reproductive rights and bodily autonomy
- Sexual harassment at workplace
- Representation in politics and governance
- LGBTQ+ rights (in later years)

Impact of New Organizations

- Legal reforms: Contributed to laws like Dowry Prohibition Act amendments (1980s) Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act (2013), Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005).
- Public awareness: Made issues like marital rape, custodial rape, and eve-teasing part of public discourse.

- Political empowerment: Influenced women's reservation in Panchayati Raj.
- Global linkages: Represented Indian women's issues in UN forums.

Plan Period		Key Features
1st (1951–56)	Welfare Approach	CSWB formed, focus on health, maternity care, welfare schemes.
2nd (1956–61)	Community Development	Integration into rural development, mahila mandals, cooperative participation.
3rd (1961–66)	Education & Skills	Adult literacy, vocational training in crafts, tailoring, food preservation.
4th (1969–74)	Income Generation	Women in economic programmes, prelude to Towards Equality report.
5th (1974–79)	Development Approach	Employment-cum-training schemes, Equal Remuneration Act (1976).
6th (1980–85)	Productivity Recognition	First chapter on women in plan; focus on health, education, employment.
7th (1985–90)	Support Services	Hostels, crèches, modern skill training, credit access.
8th (1992–97)	Empowerment Approach	Mahila Samakhya, Panchayati Raj reservations, National Perspective Plan.
9th (1997–2002)	Women's Component Plan	Fund earmarking, gender parity targets.
10th (2002–07)	Gender Mainstreaming	Infant & maternal mortality reduction, SHG expansion.
11th (2007–12)	Inclusive Growth	Gender budgeting, livelihood missions, poverty reduction.
12th (2012–17)	Safety & Skills	Entrepreneurship, resource access, anti-violence measures.
Post-2017 (NITI Aayog)	Integrated Gender Planning	Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, digital inclusion, entrepreneurship.

Foundation of Indian Feminism

Indian feminism emerged from a historical blend of indigenous reform movements and global feminist thought, shaped by colonial experiences, social reform agendas, and post-independence nation-building.

Key Foundations:

Social Reform Movements (19th century) – Led by male reformers like Raja Rammohun Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Jyotirao Phule, and Savitribai Phule, focusing on:

- Abolition of sati (1829)
- Widow remarriage (Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act, 1856)
- Women's education
- Raising age of consent

Colonial Encounter – English education, Christian missionary work, and exposure to Western liberal thought introduced ideas of equality, rights, and public participation for women.

Indigenous Women Leaders – Begum Rokeya, Pandita Ramabai, Tarabai Shinde brought *internal critique* of patriarchy within Indian society.

Freedom Struggle Influence – Nationalist movements gave women public visibility and political consciousness, linking women's emancipation to independence.

Evolution of Indian Feminism

Phase I – Social Reform & Early Feminism (Mid-19th century – 1910s)

- Focus: Social evils, legal reforms, women's education.
- Nature: Reformist, often led by upper-caste men; limited challenge to patriarchal structures.
- Key figures: Savitribai Phule, Pandita Ramabai, Begum Rokeya.

Phase II – Nationalist Feminism (1910s – 1947)

- Women participated in non-cooperation, civil disobedience, Quit India Movement.
- Leaders like Sarojini Naidu, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Aruna Asaf Ali emerged.
- Feminism intertwined with anti-colonial nationalism; less focus on internal patriarchy.

Phase III – Post-Independence State Feminism (1947 – 1970s)

- Constitution guaranteed equality (Articles 14–16, 39(d), 51A(e)).
- Laws on marriage, divorce, inheritance (Hindu Code Bills) passed.
- However, women's issues often subsumed under "development" agendas.

Phase IV – Autonomous Women's Movement (1970s – 1990s) Triggered by:

- Reports like Towards Equality (1974) showing persistent gender inequality.
- Cases like Mathura rape case leading to protests and legal reforms.
- Rise of grassroots movements on issues like dowry deaths, domestic violence, rape law reforms.
- Movements like SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association) linked feminism with labour rights.

Phase V – Contemporary Intersectional Feminism (1990s – Present)

- Liberalisation brought both new opportunities and exploitation in the informal sector.
- Feminism expanded to include:
- Dalit feminism (critiquing caste patriarchy)
- Queer feminism
- Ecofeminism
- Digital activism (#MeToo, Pinjra Tod)
- Recognition of multiple identities—class, caste, religion, sexuality—within gender struggles.

Core Characteristics of Indian Feminism

- Plural – Adapts to India's diversity; not a single-issue movement.
- Intersectional – Recognises caste, religion, region, and class as intertwined with gender.
- Hybrid Roots – Draws from indigenous reform, nationalist politics, Marxist thought, and global feminism.
- Rights + Development Approach – Legal reforms and socio-economic empowerment go hand-in-hand.

National Policy for Women

India's women's policy framework has evolved through constitutional provisions, five-year plans, and international commitments like the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and CEDAW (1993).

The first dedicated national policy came in 2001; a draft update was proposed in 2016 to address emerging challenges.

National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001-Advance, develop, and empower women to enable them to fully participate in all spheres of life.

Key Objectives:

- Social Empowerment
    - Eliminate discrimination in education, health, and nutrition.
    - Eradicate violence against women.
- Economic Empowerment
    - Ensure equal access to employment, credit, training, and markets.
    - Recognize women's work in the informal sector.
- Political Empowerment
    - Ensure equal participation in decision-making bodies.
- Legal Reforms
    - Strengthen laws on violence, property rights, and workplace equality.
- Institutional Mechanisms
    - Gender budgeting, women's cells, monitoring committees.

Draft National Policy for Women, 2016- Socio-economic changes (urbanization, digital economy, globalization) and new issues like cybercrime, migration, climate change impacts. *Shift from 'welfare' to 'rights-based' approach.*

* Priorities:

- Health & Nutrition – reduce MMR/IMR, universal healthcare access.
- Education – STEM participation, digital literacy.
- Economy – Skill training, entrepreneurship, wage parity.
- Governance – Increase political representation beyond local bodies.
- Safety – Strengthen legal frameworks for cyber and workplace harassment.
- Environment & Climate Change – Involve women in sustainable resource management.

Interventions:

- Gender budgeting across ministries.
- Convergence of schemes (e.g., linking skill training with microcredit).
- Periodic review and data-driven policy updates.

2016 draft is still under consideration; meanwhile, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Mahila E-Haat, One Stop Centres, and Women Helplines act as operational arms of the empowerment agenda.

Gender Budgeting in India.

Gender Budgeting is not a separate budget for women but a method of incorporating a gender perspective into all stages of the budget cycle—planning, allocation, and evaluation. It aims to ensure that public expenditure benefits both men and women equitably, with special focus on reducing gender gaps.

Origin in India

- Recommended by the 2001–02 Union Budget and the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001).
- Official adoption: 2005–06 Union Budget introduced a Gender Budget Statement (GBS).
- Based on Beijing Platform for Action (1995) commitment to gender mainstreaming.

Objectives

- Integrate gender concerns in policy formulation and public expenditure.
- Ensure adequate resource allocation for women-focused programmes.
- Monitor outcomes and impact on gender equality.
- Correct historical underinvestment in women's development.

Structure of Gender Budget Statement (GBS) : It has two parts

- Part A: Schemes exclusively for women (100% allocation for women).
- Part B: Schemes where at least 30% of allocation benefits women.

Example:

- Part A – Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP), Mahila Shakti Kendras.
- Part B – MGNREGA (significant women beneficiaries), Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

Institutional Mechanism

- Nodal Agency: Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD).
- Gender Budget Cells in each ministry/department to integrate gender concerns in their sectoral policies.
- Training & Capacity Building with support from Ministry of Finance and MWCD.

Benefits

- Mainstreams gender in macroeconomic policy.
- Highlights women's contribution to the economy.
- Makes government spending more equitable and accountable.
- Encourages evidence-based policymaking.

Challenges

- Many ministries treat it as a formality; limited analytical exercise.
- Lack of sex-disaggregated data.
- Weak monitoring of actual outcomes.
- Underestimation of unpaid care work in policy design.

Way Forward

- Strengthen capacity of Gender Budget Cells.
- Link budget allocations to measurable gender outcomes.
- Integrate gender budgeting at state and local levels.
- Include unpaid and care economy in policy analysis.
- Use digital dashboards for real-time monitoring.

Marital Rape

Marital rape is non-consensual sexual intercourse by a husband with his wife.

It is a form of sexual violence and violation of bodily autonomy, regardless of marital status.

In international law and under most modern legal systems, marriage does not remove the requirement for consent.

Legal Position in India

- Exception 2 to Section 375, IPC : Sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under fifteen years of age, is not rape.
- Effect: Marital rape is not recognized as a criminal offence if the wife is above the specified age (15 years in IPC; however, the Independent Thought v. Union of India (2017) judgment raised it to 18 years for child brides).

Constitutional & Human Rights Perspective

- Article 14 – Equality before law.
- Article 21 – Right to life and personal liberty includes dignity, privacy, and bodily integrity.
- CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women)– India is a signatory and is expected to criminalise all forms of sexual violence.

Arguments for Criminalizing

- Consent is essential in all sexual relationships.
- Protects women from physical, mental, and reproductive health harm.
- Aligns India with global human rights standards.
- Removes immunity for domestic sexual violence.
- Upholds constitutional guarantees of dignity and equality.

Arguments Against (as cited by some policymakers & groups)

- Fear of misuse and false allegations.
- Perceived conflict with institution of marriage.
- Difficulty of proof due to private nature of offence.
- Alternative remedies exist under laws on cruelty (Section 498A IPC) and Domestic Violence Act.

Way Forward

- Remove the marital rape exception in Section 375 IPC.
- Strengthen marital counselling, victim support, and rehabilitation.
- Sensitise law enforcement and judiciary.
- Promote consent education and gender sensitisation.
- Ensure safeguards to prevent false implication while protecting victims.