

36

**WOMEN RIGHTS MOVEMENT: A STUDY OF ORGANIZED  
FEMINISM OF POST WORLD WAR II  
UNITED STATES**

By

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A dissertation submitted to the Department of HISTORY,  
Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad in partial fulfillment of Master Degree in  
History.

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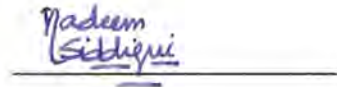
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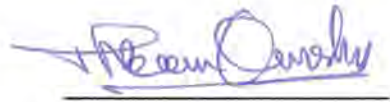
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**Dedicated to**

**MY PARENTS**

**Mr. & Mrs. Ghulam Ali**

whose love, encouragement and prayers inspired me  
to embark upon this academic adventure and are  
still continued.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All gratitude to Allah, The Most Beneficent and the Merciful who gave me the power and means to complete this thesis.

It is very difficult to put in few words my deepest feelings of gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor, Mr. Nadeem Siddiqui, for his constant guidance, valuable suggestions and sympathetic attitude in completing this work and above all making me feel enthusiastic about my work. His interest in the subjects of Women Studies and U.S. Studies encouraged me to pursue it with confidence. During the course of my study, I have learned a lot from his personality, both from academic and non-academic perspectives.

My gratitude is due to all my respected teachers for their guidance throughout my M.Sc., especially Dr. Naeem Qureshi, Chairman, Department of History for his support during this research.

I am also thankful to the Deputy Director of American Centre, Islamabad Library, Mr. Shahzad Siddiqui, for his consistent supply of articles from American Journals and magazines which proved very helpful for my work.

I am also thankful to the Library Staff of Area Study Centre, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad for their co-operation.

I am greatly indebted to my brother Liaquat Ali for his words of consolation and encouragement throughout this study which made this endeavour possible. My thanks are also due to my other family members. I could have never completed my work without their blessings.

Finally, I am indebted to my friends, Tanvir, Ghazala, Nany and Amjad who with their differentiated interests encouraged and motivated me to present this thesis in its final shape.

**SHAHNAZ ALI**

# CONTENTS

<b>-INTRODUCTION-THE PROBLEM DEFINED.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER # 1-Historical Retrospective .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>CHAPTER # 2-Feminism And American Society-A Review Of Conflict .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>CHAPTER # 3-Feminist Movement &amp; Surge for Educational And Economic Rights .....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>CHAPTER # 4-Women Rights Movement: Surge for Political Rights .....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>-CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>-BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>-APPENDICES</b>	

“I know one thing we did right  
Was the day we started to fight.  
Keep your eyes on the prize,  
Hold on, hold on”.

(from a Civil Rights song).

## INTRODUCTION: The Problem Defined

- Nature intended women to be our slaves; they are our property, we are not theirs. They belong to us, just as a tree bearing fruits belongs to a gardener. What a mad idea to demand equality for women!... Women are nothing but machines for producing children. (Napoleon Bonaparte).
- Man for the field and women for the hearth:  
Man for the sword and for the needle she;  
Man with the head and woman with the heart:  
Man to command and women to obey;  
All else confusion (Alfred, Lord Tennyson).
- We may thus conclude that there should be naturally ruling elements and elements naturally ruled....the rule of freeman over the slave is one kind of rule; that of male over the female another....the slave is entirely without the faculty of deliberation; the female indeed possesses it, but in a form which remains inconclusive.... (Aristotle).

These are some of the common stereotypes about the nature of a woman given by various philosophers, novelists and men of eminence. They are of the view that woman is not very bright and she is emotional and subjective, passive and dependent. The overwhelming evidence is that virtually no society in the world provides women equal status with men. There exists no society in which their publicly recognized power matches that of men. Nevertheless there are women who have risen to unscaled heights of achievement. Women novelists in feudal Japan of the eleventh century created works that are remembered today, women in the salons of Renaissance France gave shape to the cultural life of the nation rather whole Europe and stimulated important philosophical works, and the Quaker women in nineteenth century America were leaders in fighting for women's rights and the abolition of slavery<sup>1</sup>.

Women's efforts to gain political, economic and social equality in America are as old as the United States itself. The changing position of women in American society has been one of the most important social developments of the past century and a half. The appearance of America has been transformed as women have invaded business, the profession sports, politics and education completely, feminizing certain, spheres of life. Feminism does not speak with one voice. It does not describe a body of knowledge, a set of opinions, nor even a single strategy for social change. It describes most essentially a movement and a commitment of and to women - women's values, goals and understanding, of and to women's liberation from the historic rule of men<sup>2</sup>. That rule penetrated women's hearts and their minds as much as their bodies, and the struggle against it had been waged at the practical level.

The definition of "Feminism" incorporates both a doctrine of equal rights for women (the organized movement to attain women's rights) and an ideology of social transformation aiming to create a world for women beyond simple social equality<sup>3</sup>. Feminism can be seen as a wide and changing movement, seeking in various ways to raise women's social status. Feminism includes all forms of opposition to any form of social, political or economic discrimination which women suffer because of their sex. Although women comprise a majority of the population, they are often treated like a minority group - assigned a definitive place in the social order, denied access to careers and power in the public arena. All feminists agree that women have been assigned lower status than men and that women are discriminated against socially, economically and politically and that



this state of affairs is unjustified and must be changed.

In the purely theoretical analysis three major positions of feminist thought can be identified, those of the socialists, radicals and liberals as an academic categorization.

Socialist feminism is one of the main theories of twentieth century feminism. It believes that women are second-class citizens in patriarchal capitalism which depends for its survival on the exploitation of working people, and on the special exploitation of women<sup>4</sup>. Socialist feminists see the oppression of women as stemming from the class system. Women have continued to be oppressed as a sex in all succeeding class societies. The socialist feminist explanation of women's oppression places major emphasis on economic factors. The oppression of women is traced to the institution of private property and the first division of society into classes<sup>5</sup>.

Radical feminism argues that women's oppression comes from being categorised as an inferior class to the class 'men' on the basis of gender<sup>6</sup>. Radical feminism aims to destroy this class system. It focuses on the roots of male domination and claims that all form of oppression are extensions of male supremacy. Radical feminists see patriarchy as the defining characteristics of a society.

Liberal feminism is one of the main source of feminist political and social theory and has the most long-term history. It is the theory of individual freedom for women. It aims to achieve equal legal, political and social rights for women. It wishes to bring women equally into all public institutions and to extend the

creation of knowledge so that women's issues can no longer be ignored<sup>7</sup>. The liberal mode of thought provides the American woman with a solution for her dual role as mother and wage earner.

Feminism began to grow into a substantial political force in the United States during 1840s. Then the legal advances of women in the 1920s and 1930s scattered the possibility of a single suffrage identity of American feminism. But it was the 1960s that witnessed a dramatic revival of feminism in America which is the central theme of the present study.

As the feminism expanded in late 1960s, its main thrust became raising women's consciousness of the impact of sexism on all aspects of their individual lives and collective roles in the society.

The problem of women's role in American society-what it was, what it is and what it should be has erupted since the 1830s in a changing series of demand for legal, social, economic, educational and political rights. The main direction of American women's history is the history of women's movements that has been around for more than a hundred years and that is an important historical phenomenon in its own right<sup>8</sup>.

The present study aims at an historical survey of women movements which have steered their way gradually into the lives of American men and women reshaping the American society. The study also covers, in the historical perspective, the struggle of women from the colonial period till the women suffrage movement of 1920s, but the main emphasis and focus of the study is the women's rights movement of the 1960s and early 1970s. The women movements

can be studied as a story of long sufferings, of exploitation, of misunderstandings and hard won victories. The women movements in the United States focuses on women's inferior status in American society. They do share their feeling about the exploitation, oppression and discrimination of women against men. They want to do something to save them. Their ideas paved the way for new strategies. The present study reviews those movements, their ideas and action as they left a considerable impact on women and on American society as a whole. It provides insights into the tremendous changes through which the American women passed over the past few decades.

The women's movement discussed in the present study, can be understood as consisting of two great waves of feminist activity. The first began in 1830 with the Abolitionist Movement and ended with the achievement of the female vote in 1920. The second wave appeared with the Civil Rights Movement in the early 1960s. Both waves had a considerable impact on the American society in general and on American women in particular.

The present study is also important for the reason that it would help identify the problems still being faced by women in their struggle for equality as there are still many battles to be fought in its regard.

As the present study is the survey of women movements in the twentieth century America, one finds trends rapidly changing from an extreme fundamentalist view to the most radical one. Focusing the study on the changing positions of American women in various spheres the society, politics, economy and education, the following question are to be answered.

- What were the reasons and developments which brought into focus the need for social, political and economic equality of women in the American society?
- How far less improved educational and economic situation of women provided a basis for launching the organized feminist movement in the post - world war II United States?
- Did the so-called victory in form of “women suffrage” fulfilled all the promises it made to the American women in the next few decades?
- To what extent Women Rights Movement in the United States proved successful in the wake of changing, realities related to the spheres of women’s involvement in the American society?
- What were the challenges that confront the conscious segments of the women community, in asserting their ‘equality’ in various spheres or enlarging the scope of that equality? How far they were successful in accepting those challenges?

The study is primarily based upon the deduction of facts and other developments from secondary sources. There is enough printed material on the subject, however, a lot of primary sources have also been consulted such as important documents related to Women Rights Movement, convention reports, texts of different legislations. As far as methodology of the whole exercise is concerned, due to the narrative nature of the topic a traditional/historic approach

has been used presenting before the reader a well documented narration of all developments so that one could drive the conclusions from the course of events.

In the United States, the increased activity in the new feminist movement has resulted in a lot of literature about women in the past few years. The social, economic and political status of women in the past and present scenarios of American Society and their struggle for liberation has been explored.

Although women make up the major portion of American population, however, it was not their number but the Women's Movement which made them aware of their exclusion from history, politics and social framework. The present study aims to trace the rise, composition, achievements and limitations of the women's movement. It comprise of four chapters with an introduction and conclusion.

The first chapter is a survey of the achievements and failures of the struggle of women's liberation from the colonial period, keeping in view the problems and family patterns of colonial women. The chapter also focuses on the nineteenth - century women's movement. The growth of women's movement is examined in the light of the social, economic, educational and political position of women. The chapter also deals with the rise of women suffrage movement of early twentieth century with the impact of first world war on women's struggle.

The succeeding chapters deals with the rise and development of the women's rights movements of the 1960s and its accomplishment in following issue areas: politics, economics, education and society, starting with a brief survey of women's efforts during the period of 1920 and 1960.

Striking changes in the position of women have taken place in the American society. The second chapter of the present study focuses on the social changes. It emphasizes on the origin and growth of the women's movement raising the status of women in the American society.

Women's struggle to gain access to equal educational and economic opportunities has been a long one. chapter 3 focuses on the activities of the women's movement to expand the economic and educational rights and opportunities of women. It also examines the issues on which feminists have worked in these areas and the progress they have made.

Women's involvement in politics and the impact of politics on women have become widely debated issue. The debate over the nature and implications of the political rights is the topic of the fourth chapter. It discusses the attempts of women to expand their activities to the political arena and also examines the impact of the attainment of political rights.

The study ends with a brief analysis and some conclusions.

## NOTES

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## CHAPTER 1:

### HISTORICAL RETROSPECTIVE

I've got the children to tend  
The clothes to mend  
The floor to mop  
The food to shop

Then chicken to fry  
The baby to dry  
I got company to feed  
The garden to weed  
I've got shirts to press  
The lots to dress  
The cane to be cut  
I got to clean up this hut.

Sun, rain, curving sky  
Mountain, oceans, leaf and stone  
Stars, shine, moon glow  
You're all that I can call my own.

(Maya Angelou)



## WOMEN IN THE U.S. PRE-INDEPENDENCE MILIEU

The efforts of American women to win greater recognition can trace their roots in the colonial period. From the settlement of Jamestown (1607) until the outbreak of the American Revolution, (1770's), the colonists struggled to establish a stable society. The colonial record does not show in any simple narration whether the status of women was uniformly high or consistently low. Instead women's status commonly depended on the religious climate and laws of her region, her social position and family history.<sup>1</sup> People came to the United States from many places as families, or in religious refugees groups or adventurers. Their early lives were shaped by severe requirements for survival. Entire family had to share the work on the newland. Women worked to the limit of their strength, planting, harvesting, tending stock as well as doing their traditional work of cooking, spinning and sewing.<sup>2</sup> Women worked with men in the productive life also as they even ran cottage establishments producing clothes, candles, soap etc, besides performing the traditional roles of mother and a wife.

The Pilgrims who founded Plymouth Colony in 1620 gave men the ultimate authority in social life but on the whole they encouraged men and women to live together in harmony.<sup>3</sup> The Puritans of Massachusetts Bay Colony, founded in 1632 also had a family ethic with egalitarian elements and they believed that relationship between husband and wife should be governed by mutual affection.<sup>4</sup> Although colonial Americans considered piety a major fame grace but in general, they maintained the view of St. Paul toward women that they should keep silence in the churches<sup>5</sup> and be subject to their husbands. Colonists also followed

the English common law, according to which women were the possession of their fathers and husbands. A married woman did not exist as a legal entity. The husband became the owner of wife's personal property and was given the power to do whatever he wanted to do to that property.<sup>6</sup> The women could not testify in court, they could not sue or sign contracts and they did not have the right of custody of their own children if legally separated. A widow's life was freer than that of a wife. The laws concerning married women's property were not changed anywhere until the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> The inferior status was supported by the dominant ideology of the period, the strongest component of which was religion. Women's place was determined by limitations of mind and body, a punishment for the original sin of Eve, however, to fit women for motherhood, the Almighty had endowed her with such virtues as modesty, weakness and piety.<sup>8</sup> Female slaves were sold at auctions in United States, for the same job as men, namely as field hands in the Cotton States.<sup>9</sup> A few got jobs as house-servants. The women of United States were suffering the "civil-death". According to the customs, she could not speak in public and of course, could not take interest in politics. 'Civil death' also applied to all women in political matters.<sup>10</sup> Political rights were completely restricted to men as heads of families. However, women survived socially and some of them put a brave fight against male dominance. The most dramatic example of women's political leadership in colonial time is given by Mistress Margaret Brent of Maryland. Her name appears in court records and public affairs between 1638 and 1650.<sup>11</sup> She demanded a "place & voyce" in the Maryland Assembly. Although she was the executrix of Gov. Leonard Calvert's will, her request was denied.<sup>12</sup>

The question of equal status for women was first raised by Anne Hutchison, the most famous woman preacher of the colonial era, when she challenged the Puritan orthodoxy and expressed women's frustration with the limitations imposed upon them by traditional roles.<sup>13</sup>

The demands of the American women were changing with the change of work and family patterns of American man especially during the decade of turbulence that preceded the revolution. Women began to change their spheres of interest during the revolution. White women when they were asked to discuss politics used to offer mere apologies in the mid 1760's. They started reading the political literature widely and publishing their own sentiments and supporting the war efforts in a variety of ways.<sup>14</sup> Refusal to purchase imported goods and to increase the domestic production was an important way of economic boycott in their struggle against Great Britain.<sup>15</sup> During the Revolution, American women supported the patriotic cause in a number of ways. They strongly opposed the Stamp Act, tea-tax and the Coercive Acts.<sup>16</sup> Many women gained political experience when they organized the 'Daughters of Liberty' as a counter part to the 'Sons of Liberty' to support the Revolutionary war, although they never reached anything like the degree of organization of the Sons of Liberty under Samuel Adams.<sup>17</sup> Two famous women, Ester De Berdt Reed and Sara Bache, Benjamin Franklin's daughter<sup>18</sup>, headed an effort to supply troops with badly needed clothing. Many female patriots as Deborah Sampson, Nancy Hart, Lydia Darragh and many others disguised themselves as men to fight in the army.<sup>19</sup> The Revolution brought modest change in women's status or men's attitude toward

them. Men also recognized and changed their attitude towards the inferior status of women to some extent. One Philadelphia woman wrote her husband detailing her support for the Revolution, "I know this-that as free I can die but once; but as a slave I shall not be worthy of life. I assure you that these are the sentiments of all my American sisters."<sup>20</sup>

Thomas Paine the author of famous pamphlet *Common Sense*, was the first man to condemn the inferior status of women. He spoke for women's rights and described women in the 1770's as "robbed of freedom and will by the laws, the slaves of opinion...".<sup>21</sup> The brilliant and witty Abigail Adams wrote to her husband during the revolutionary war, "If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation".<sup>22</sup> These isolated arguments made by a few individuals were the sole reflections of women's protest upto the war and beyond it also. Yet not many women were heard of till the end of the century; with industrialization and expansion the family patterns of the American life were changing and so was the status of the American women.<sup>23</sup>

## **WOMEN IN POST INDEPENDENCE UNITED STATES**

The experiences of women during the Revolutionary war were greatly influenced by the extent of their husbands' political participation as well as by the region in which their families lived. Female activists commented frequently on the lack of friends and relatives' support. They were devoid of advice and guidance and there had been no person to advise them about how to proceed in their modest efforts towards sexual equality. In contrast to these loyalists, who complained of

their inability to deal effectively with their problems, patriotic women managed the family property in the absence of their men folk, tended to find the experience a positive one.<sup>24</sup> They attained a new sense of confidence in themselves and on the other hand, the men started developing a new appreciation for their wives contribution to the family's welfare. The revolutionary war dissolved some of the distinctions between masculine and feminine traits as perceived previously. The line between male and female behaviour which was apparently so impenetrable, became less defined. Women who would previously have criticized if they abandoned their natural feminine timidity now found themselves praised for doing just that.<sup>25</sup> Women gained confidence with growing economic independence and at times they could exert significant influence on their men. They expected equal treatment after realizing that they had participated in the wartime effort. The general effect on the society was that most families persisted in following male dominated patterns but some changed their traditional roles by displaying more egalitarian marital relationship.<sup>26</sup> The old patterns were not displaced but they were no longer predominant in all the families. By the end of the eighteenth century, the lives of American women were undergoing notable changes. Society differed from that in the seventeenth century and the conditions of women differed accordingly. The idea that this period represented a "golden age" for women is clearly a myth.<sup>27</sup> However, this period can be termed as a modest beginning on a rocky road leading to the struggle for equal rights in the new land called the United States.

## **WOMEN IN NINETEENTH CENTURY AMERICA**

The period of nineteenth century is the one in which decisive changes

occurred in the status of American women. This period offers essential clues to an understanding of later institutional developments, particularly the shape and nature of the women's rights movement.<sup>28</sup> When we take an overview of American society in the early 19th century, we see a shift in the ideological outlook of many people. The idea of equality was at that time not only limited to white males alone, it was also a slogan of all other oppressed groups, including blacks and women.<sup>29</sup> Hence women were, if not treated as a minority, for a time being classified as one alongwith others adding to the complex nature of multi-dimensional struggle for rights. After the Revolution many states allowed free blacks to vote but this right was not extended to women. Only New Jersey, allowed men and women to vote if they were over 21 years of age and had property worth 50 pounds.<sup>30</sup> All other states limited the vote to free, white males. In 1806, New Jersey also fell into the same line.<sup>31</sup> The year between 1800 and 1830 witnessed a remarkable expansion of women's activities: a quantitative growth of organizations, an impressive geographical expansion and a great diversification in the kinds of work supported.<sup>32</sup> In New York City, the charity school for girls was established and in Boston the Fragment Society was formed among ladies of several congregations to "alleviate the distress of the indigent..."<sup>33</sup>.

Before the revolutionary war and uptill 1820s, there was no education for most women. A few rich women were tutored in French, embroidery, painting, singing, playing in institutions called Female Seminaries.<sup>34</sup> In the 19th century, higher education was opened to women, beginning with the Mount Holyoke Seminary.<sup>35</sup> In 1819, Emma Williard founded her school. She presented a petition

to the New York legislature for a women's seminary.<sup>36</sup> She taught in her school history, maths, geography and physiology. In addition, some of the men's colleges instituted "affiliated" colleges for women such as Barnard (1889) by Columbia and Radcliffe (1894) by Harvard.<sup>37</sup> Co-education was not introduced into higher education until 1833, when Oberlin College admitted women. At first women were given a special course intended to prepare them for house-making or teaching. In 1834, the first independent college for women, Wheaton College was founded by Mary Lyon at Norton, Massachusetts.<sup>38</sup> Like Emma Williard, Mary Lyon was also able to capitalize on the new regard for women's sphere. She was a teacher when she began her campaign to found an endowed institution of higher learning for women, one that would rescue young women from "empty gentility"<sup>39</sup> and prepare them for enlarged social roles. She declared, "Our future statesmen and rulers, ministers and missionaries must come inevitably under the moulding hand of the female".<sup>40</sup> In the latter part of the nineteenth century, a number of colleges especially for women opened: Vassar in 1865, Wellesley and Smith in 1875 and Bryn Mawr in 1885.<sup>41</sup> The midwestern state universities were some of the first to admit women: Iowa in 1856; Wisconsin in 1860; Michigan in 1870.<sup>42</sup> Thus, a number of endeavours for education of girls and women were undertaken during the nineteenth century. Nevertheless by the end of the century, enormous gains had been made in the general education of females.

Significant change in the status of women began with industrialization and economic changes leading to changes in the family patterns of the American home. Women gained confidence with growing economic independence and at

times they could exert significant influence on their men. Industrialization created a split between work and family life that brought new job opportunities to women.<sup>43</sup> Women were moving into industry during the first half of the nineteenth century. Women did over 100 different industrial jobs mostly in the textile industry. By 1850 in the United States, there were 225,000 women in industrial jobs.<sup>44</sup> Most women worked very hard during the industrial revolution. At home, they were housewives and servants; in the mills, they were lowly wage-earners. Many had to work 13-hours a day in the sweet shops and mills of the newly industrialized society.<sup>45</sup> The crowding of women into a few industries increased competition for work and thereby made them more vulnerable than men to wage-cutting, overwork and casualization.<sup>46</sup> However it also added a new progressive look in the United States society converting it into a more tolerant and open social scenario.

The account of the Lowell Mills, Massachusetts portrays the condition of women in industries. Sara Bagley, speaking before the legislation committee for working women at Lowell, said that “she worked in a room with more than 150 people, where 293 small lamps and 61 large lamps burned morning and night during the lighting season making the air foul. Sometimes as many as 30 women were sick in one day from the fumes.”<sup>47</sup> Women at Lowell organized a union called the Lowell Female Labour Reform Association led by Sara Bagley. They took petitions to the Massachusetts legislature against the 13 to 16 hours work-day in 1845. Sarah tried her best to influence the law makers to raise the status of women by providing them healthy or at least human working conditions. Though



her group and union made little progress against politicians and owners but their efforts were an important part of the long battle against discrimination.<sup>48</sup> The formation of union proved that women workers could develop a stable organization, give it dynamic leadership and carry on systematic and partly successful campaign.<sup>49</sup> Married women were still in enslavement as far as their legal rights were concerned. In 1840 women could not manage their own property, sign legal papers or control their own wages. Their husbands controlled their earnings and had custody of children after divorce.<sup>50</sup> After 1860 many states passed legislation that enabled married women to hold property.

The women's rights movement developed from two main sources. On the one hand, it emerged from women's growing awareness of their common conditions and grievances. Simultaneously, it was an aspect of ante-bellum reform politics, particularly of the antislavery movement.<sup>51</sup> Women had been active in charitable organizations before, but it was the antislavery movement that schooled them in political activism, organization, petition and public speaking to often hostile audiences.<sup>52</sup> Some leaders of the antislavery movement welcomed the help of women, but others refused to accept their aid. The clash of the slave owner of the South and the industrialist of the North became evident in the politico-economic power struggle. To vanquish the Southern slave-owners, the Northern industrialists supported a movement to abolish slavery.<sup>53</sup> Many women joined the Abolitionist movement and thus gained their political experience. This movement was the most important direct cause of the upsurge of the women's liberation movement that occurred in the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>54</sup> In 1832, Maria Weston

Chapman and 12 other women established the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society. Appealing to the women of Massachusetts, the society made the point, "As wives and mothers, as daughters and sisters, we are deeply responsible for the influence we have on the human race, we are bound to urge men to cease to do evil and learn to do good."<sup>55</sup> In 1833, American Anti-Slavery Society was formed in Philadelphia. There, a few women were permitted to attend but not to join the society or sign the "Declaration of Sentiments and Purposes".<sup>56</sup> So when the convention adjourned, twenty women met to form the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society.<sup>57</sup> Women participation in the abolition of slavery evoked great fear and hatred. In 1835, a meeting of Boston Female Anti-Slavery Movement was attacked, in 1838, Anti-Slavery convention of American women was also attacked.<sup>58</sup> This is why early women supporters of abolition did not discuss it in public. But as women were caught up in the movement, they began to resent at the restrictions on American females and began to press for women's rights to speak and to participate in public life.<sup>59</sup> Female abolitionists followed the course of the anti-slavery movement from evangelicism to politics, moving from a framework of individual sin and conversion to an understanding of institutionalized oppression and social reform.<sup>60</sup> This development enabled them and other women's rights pioneers to imagine changing the traditional subservient status of women.

Angelina and Sarah Grimke, of slave origin but educated as gentle women, were the first female abolitionists agents to speak publicly for abolition. In 1836, they began to address small groups of women, in 1837, they began speaking to

larger gatherings. They felt extremely frustrated with the issue of slavery. They urged women to be responsible for their own lives and to cease putting their faith in men and their opinions. Their activities provoked sharp criticism from clergy. The clergy proclaimed that when women assumes the place and tone of man as a public performer, her character becomes unnatural.<sup>61</sup> Many abolitionists protested against women's participation, left the American Anti-Slavery Society and in 1840, formed American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Movement.<sup>62</sup> They were against women to have the right to speak and to hold office in the society.

The denials of women's rights began to create awareness among women about the restrictions on them. The climax of such restrictions was reached at the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention held in London. After going about three thousand miles, it was discovered that women formed no part of the constituent elements of the moral world.<sup>63</sup> They were not seated at the convention and were forced to sit in the gallery. This treatment made the women even more aware of their inferior status. Some of the American women who were denied seat in the convention called the 1848 convention at Seneca Falls. Notable women at the convention were Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony and Matilda Joslyn Gage.<sup>64</sup> This convention marked the beginning of the women's suffrage movement.

The first episode of the woman's rights movement was the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention. This convention was the woman's first beginnings for direct participation in political life. The group of women who were not content with the definition of womanhood restricting their influence to the narrow sphere of home

and family, recognized the need for political equality and made the achievement of such equality their primary goal. The Seneca Fall Convention of 1848 was organized by ‘divorced wives, childless women and sour old maids’,<sup>65</sup> to name a few, Mrs. Elizebath Cady Stanton, Ms. Lucretia Mott, Mrs. McClintok and other fearless women.<sup>66</sup> They convened this conference with an objective to consider the social, civil and religious conditions and rights of women. This convention sought decision-making power for women at three levels of social life: first the home, then the local community and finally the nation at large.<sup>67</sup> Three hundred interested women and men, coming from as far as fifty miles, approved a Declaration of Sentiments, modelled on the Declaration of Independence. To most women, the important demands were their desire to gain control of their property and earnings, guardianship of their children, rights to divorce etc.<sup>68</sup> (Appendix-I)

The convention spoke of grievances against men. It said,

“Man had compelled woman to submit to laws in the formation of which she has no voice... Having deprived her of the first right of a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of the legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides....”<sup>69</sup>

The declaration holds these truths to be self-evident that all men and women are created equal; they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are life, liberty and pursuit of happiness.<sup>70</sup>

Thus, the convention was consciously intended to initiate a broader movement for the emancipation of women. For the women who organized the

convention, the first and greatest task was acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary to lead such an enterprise. In Elizebath Stanton's words, 'they had to transform themselves into a race of women worthy to assert the humanity of women'.<sup>71</sup> After the Seneca Fall Convention, several conventions were held as at Rochester in 1853 and at Albany in 1854. The movement quickly spread to other states. It bore its sweet fruit in New York when the Property Bill was passed which was amended in 1860 and entitled "An Act concerning the Rights and Liabilities of husband and wife".<sup>72</sup> This law, emancipated completely the wife, gave her full control of her own property, rendered her joint guardian of her children with her husband. The movement gained momentum but the reaction against it became more vitriolic. The press was controlled mostly by the anti-feminists. The women view point was projected in abolitionist papers and a number of independent women's journals founded by feminists for disseminating their ideas. Many newspapers attacked the women's suffrage movement, for example, the New York Herald attacked Lucy Stone, "How funny it would sound in the newspapers that Lucy Stone, pleading a case, took suddenly ill... and perhaps gave birth to a boy in court".<sup>73</sup> To counter such adverse media tone, women started their own newspapers such as, The Lily, The Una, Pittsburgh Visitor, Women's Advocate etc.<sup>74</sup>

Women's movements at that time were run mostly by married women in their spare time, after doing all the housework and child care. Most important among these ladies were: Lucy Stone was considered its most gifted orator;<sup>75</sup> and Elizebath Stanton<sup>76</sup>, its best philosopher and the programme writer. Stanton

introduced a resolution calling for women's suffrage. Susan B. Anthony<sup>77</sup> was its most notable organizer; and Sojourner Truth<sup>78</sup>, a free black slave toured the upper Mid-west, speaking on behalf of Anti-slavery and women's rights.

During the civil war, women became actively involved in national politics. The civil war brought more women into community effort. Because of the role of women in nursing and relief work, there was a general expectation that women would be given the right to vote in recognition of their war-time effort. But that was not to be the case. The status of women was changed a little in economical, political and social spheres of life. Legally women's position began to be ameliorated with the first married Women's Property Acts, passed in Mississippi in 1839 and in New York in 1848.<sup>79</sup>

By 1840 to 1860, the rise of US commerce and industry created a class of upper and middle class women who had some leisure and a little money of their own.<sup>80</sup> About the same time these women began to have access to some education which opened new ideas and theories of equality. After the civil war in 1860, free high schools for women were opened in Boston and Philadelphia. Yet opposition to any higher education continued. Universities in Iowa, Michigan, Ohio and Illinois admitted women only when they lacked students. Women teachers were paid lower salaries and they were not allowed to attend the meetings of University.<sup>81</sup>

The women's movement at that time assumed as its first priority the drive for women's suffrage. In 1869, the movement split into two major factions over ideological and tactical questions.<sup>82</sup> Insisting on a women suffrage amendment to

the constitution, Stanton and Anthony formed the National Women Suffrage Association (NWSA) in 1869.<sup>83</sup> This organization restricted its membership only to women and embraced the broad cause of women's rights and the right to vote. Another group led by Lucy Stone and Julia Ward Howe organized the American Women Suffrage Association (AWSA) in 1869.<sup>84</sup> They limited its activities to the issue of women's suffrage. The supporters of NWSA were radical in their thoughts. They rejected man's superiority and worked hard towards it. They also published an outspoken newspaper called Revolution.<sup>85</sup> The leaders of AWSA were moderates and included men. They also published a newspaper called the Women Journal.<sup>86</sup> The journal was conservative in style and work in a soft-pedaled way. The AWSA's strategy towards the suffrage issue was to work state by state. It first gained success in the west, where most women in fact worked with men. Wyoming gave suffrage to women in 1869. Lobbying for this was done mostly by women. One such woman was Esther Morris<sup>87</sup> who was appointed the first woman justice of peace. Wyoming was admitted as a state in 1890 and later Utah, Colorado and Idaho were admitted in 1910 as states with women's suffrage.<sup>88</sup>

The two organizations NWSA and AWSA co-existed for over twenty years and used some of the same tactics in their campaigns for suffrage i.e. lecture tours, lobbying activities, petition campaign etc. By 1890, the two organizations merged to form one National American Women Suffrage Association (NAWSA).

Although the cause of women suffrage seemed to have come to a dead halt in the period from 1870 to 1910, but some gains were achieved. The women's

rights movement was growing. Public education became more readily available. By 1882, the higher education of American women was an established fact. By 1890, there were more girls enrolled in high schools than boys.<sup>89</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, alcoholism was widespread, as it was the last refuge of downtrodden male workers. Its burden fell on wives whose entire family income went to support their husbands drinking habits. Most of these women favoured Prohibition.<sup>90</sup> Towards the end of the nineteenth century, while women were still denied the vote, associations of, mainly middle-class, women flourished which played an undeniable role to bring many issues of interest of women to the attention of politicians and the public.<sup>91</sup>

The suffrage movement was predominantly middle-class and it never had many working class members. For working class women, a Women's Nationalist Socialist Union was organized in 1904.<sup>92</sup> It was radical in nature and it achieved much in California where socialism was already strong. In 1907, Josephine Kaneko founded a newspaper called Socialist Women<sup>93</sup> which spoke for socialism and women's rights for seven years. Socialist propaganda for voting rights attracted and held captive thousands of working women from 1908 till 1912. By 1914 the suffrage movement had become so large that they could ally themselves with political parties at the top.

The Progressive Movement from 1900-1912 intended to restore America's peace through steps towards democratization and through laws which would break big monopolies in the country. It was not merely a political movement but a pervasive ideology for reform in the 1900-1920 period. The General Federation of



Women's Club was a prime mover and lobbyist in the successful progressive drive for a pure food and Drug Act.<sup>94</sup> By 1914, the General Federation officially supported suffrage. The most dramatic alteration in the image of women came after the First World War. World War I helped to propel the women suffrage movement forward. Women were to be found working in any and all jobs, connected with the war effort. They poured into industrial work and public services. Even with the tremendous contribution made by women to the war effort, the right to vote was not just there. However after the war, efforts to win approval for the woman suffrage amendment accelerated because of the fear that the momentum generated by the war might gradually cease.

In Jan-Feb 1919, some 24 state legislatures petitioned Congress to submit a federal women suffrage amendment for state ratification.<sup>95</sup> In May 1919, the amendment was passed, followed by Senate approval in June. A little more than another year passed before the ratification of the two thirds of the states. In spite of the strong opposition, women's suffrage was won and it became the law of the land on August 18, 1920 and the Nineteenth Amendment became the part of the constitution.<sup>96</sup> (Appendix-II)

Before women's suffrage was won in 1920, the women's organizations conducted 56 referendum campaigns, 480 campaigns to pursue state legislatures to allow suffrage referenda, 47 campaigns at state constitutional conventions for suffrage, 277 campaigns to include women's suffrage in state party programmes, 30 campaigns to include women's suffrage in national party programmes and 19 campaigns to get the Nineteenth Amendment through Congress.<sup>97</sup>

The 19th Amendment to the US Constitution, declared that “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged....on account of sex”.<sup>98</sup> The amendment marked a major victory for the Women’s Rights Movement. From Seneca Falls Convention to the 19th Amendment, a period of seventy-two years was enough to bring the women’s movement virtually to a collapse from exhaustion. With the passage of the amendment, the majority of the women activists as well as the public at large assumed that “having gained the vote, woman’s complete equality has been obtained”.<sup>99</sup> The ratification of the Women’s Suffrage Amendment to the constitution, the first great triumph for the women’s rights movement, was a clear victory regarding its objectives. Feminists had counted on the vote as the right by which they would secure all other rights-economic, social and legal-but in doing so, “they had assumed a community of interest among American women that did not yet exist”.<sup>100</sup> Many women’s right advocates believed that enactment of the 19th Amendment signaled a triumphant turning point in the struggle for sexual equality. Suffragists predicted that acquisition of the vote would not only give women new leverage in politics but would also help them achieve a greater measure of freedom and independence in the home and economy. Carrier Chapman Catt wrote “The whole aim of the women’s movement has been to destroy the idea that obedience is necessary to women; to train women to such self-respect that they would not grant obedience; and to train men to such comprehension of equity that they would not exact it”.<sup>101</sup> For many women who had devoted their lives to the struggle for equal rights, victory in the suffrage fight represented a major stride towards those goals. The broad reason for success of the suffrage movement was the socio-economic

change that had taken place and it was seen as a reform movement.

Suffrage movement became a part of the progressive movement supported by farmers, socialists, trade unions and a lot of working women who had developed political interest in the movement. It became a success when it was no longer limited to a few elite or to a few middle-class women. It became a mass issue. On the other hand, World War I served as a catalyst in that it brought still more women into industry, government and other important fields, thus making women's work indispensable.

It can be argued that the first two decades of the twentieth century were veritable ferment of feminist activity. The growing suffrage movement was one fact of this ferment, though by World War I it would be the dominant one. The vitality of the women's movement rested not on its unity of opinion but rather on its diversity.<sup>102</sup>

In 1920-21, twenty state legislatures gave women the right to jury duty,<sup>103</sup> some passed minimum wage and hour laws for women, two passed equal pay laws and Wisconsin passed a general equal rights bill.<sup>104</sup> Women lobbyists in Washington got Congress to pass the following Bills, in 1921 and 1922, relevant to women's interests:<sup>105</sup>

1. A bill guaranteeing money for teaching mothers-teaching them how to care for babies in a better way.
2. A bill to equalize citizenship requirements for men and women.
3. A bill for meat inspection.

4. In 1923 a bill to extend the merit system in the civil service.
5. The Child Labour Amendment to the constitution in 1924.

The many women's organizations that had been active during the progressive era continued the struggle for reform during the 1920s. The General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), National Consumers League (NCL), and National Women's Trade Union League (NWTUL) joined with the League of Women Voters (LWV), which carried on the work of the National American Women Suffrage Association, to bring pressure on the Congress and the state legislatures in relation to a wide range of matters of concern to women.<sup>106</sup> In 1920, they established the Women's Joint Congressional Committee (WJCC). The most conspicuous success of the WJCC was the short lived Shepherd-Towner Bill, designed to ensure protection to mothers and children through federal aid to maternal and health care programmes.<sup>107</sup> The women's party pledged to work for full equality of women and they succeeded in getting the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) introduced in the Congress in 1923. After 1923, however, women's liberation movement gradually began to vanish from the national scene, because women were attacked by the conservatives, right wing women and men and the narrow ideological outlook of the suffragists who thought that they had won their basic goals and all other aims were not important.<sup>108</sup> Although the women's organization such as NCL, under the direction of Florence Kelley, and the NWTUL continued their campaigns in the interest of working women throughout the decade.

The focus on women in the 1920s shifted greatly in ways that feminists of

the time deplored. The changes in social life and behaviour that characterized the decade the oft-noted revolution in manners and morals-shifted emphasis from a concern for social justice to one glorifying individual gratification.<sup>109</sup> This represented a major shift in the history of women in American life.

The new woman who emerged in the 1920s was neither the creation of the prewar feminists nor of their successors, who remained active during the decade. She was a product of the new moral climate accentuated by post war prosperity.<sup>110</sup>

The important step in the political maturation of women, after the right to vote in 1920, was apparently a response to the effects of the Franklin D. Roosevelt era. The Roosevelt Administration made a conscious effort to appeal for the support of women. The emphasis on the domestic policy issues during the first half of his tenure led Roosevelt to consult with and employ numerous women in his Administration, including Labour Secretary, Frances Perkins, the first woman Cabinet member.<sup>111</sup> Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, First lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, took advantage of every opportunity to involve women in both government and party affairs.<sup>112</sup>

The new freedom in morals and manners took shape according to the changing economic conditions that made it necessary for many women to work. In other words, economic necessity and a changing conception of need continued to draw women into the labour market during the 1920s. The female labour force grew 26% during this time and consumption patterns changed. In the course of 1920s, the numbers of married homemakers with jobs outside the home increased 50%, so that approximately one in every seven married women had entered the

labour force. While the increase in the number of working wives had occurred in all social groups, a large majority of white women remained in traditional domestic roles.<sup>113</sup> From 1920 onwards, the most important change in the lives of American women has been in the area of employment and it produced widespread social and political consequences. Although the percentage of working women did rise continuously throughout the twentieth century, most women were confined to low-paying and routine women's jobs. New Deal Legislation provided further protection for women in the areas of hours and wages but the acts called National Industrial Recovery Act and the Fair Labour Standards Act tolerated wage differentials and set minimums for women at lower rates than those for men.<sup>114</sup>

However, by the 1930's, the women's movement had become so embroiled in emotional antagonism over the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) that the justice which existed on both sides was ignored.<sup>115</sup> Instead of moving ahead together to attack the practical problems of discrimination, women's groups were polarized over questions of ideology. Legal advances of women in the 1920s and 1930s scattered the possibility of a single suffrage identity of American Feminism.<sup>116</sup> The Women's Party proposed equal rights amendments in order to enforce federal equality. The party argued that ERA is necessary because of discrimination against women in wages, employments, education and numerous laws.<sup>117</sup> While the ERA was opposed by women connected with the Women's Bureau and the League of Women Voters. They argued that the ERA might destroy the protective labour laws for women.<sup>118</sup>

The principal result of the amendment battle was to highlight the profound

divisions within the woman's movement. The suffragists had never clearly explained their goals and the conflict revealed the extent to which different participants in the woman's movement held opposing conceptions of equality.<sup>119</sup> After this, the feminism could not retain a popular following. The women's rights movement, beset by controversy, weakened by lack of widespread support, and torn by internecine warfare, had ceased to exist as a powerful force in American Society.<sup>120</sup>

Finally, it could be argued that it was the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), first proposed to Congress in 1923 by the Women's Party as an amendment to the constitution. "Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction",<sup>121</sup> which eventually became a focus for the new feminist movements of the late 1960s.

## NOTES

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5. Jean E. Friedman, et.al (eds), *Our American Sisters: Women in American Life and Thought*, Lexington, 1987, pp.2-3.
6. Qurat-ul-ain, *Women in American Politics; A case study of Geraldine Ferraro's candidature as Vice-President*, unpublished M. Phil thesis, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, 1989, p.6.
7. Barbara Deckard, *The Women's Movement: Political, Socio-economic and Psychological issues*, New York, 1970, p.8.
8. Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, New York, 1970, p.8.
9. Qurat-ul-ain, *Women's American Politics*, p.7.
10. Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, p.8. "Civil Death" is defined as the total deprivation of civil rights resulting from conviction for treason or another serious offense.  
*American Heritage Dictionary*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1982, p.277.
11. Giele "United States", p.305.
12. *Encyclopedia Americana*, Vol.29, Danbury, 1981, p.103.
13. Friedman, et.al., *Our American sisters*, p.3.
14. Sabra Butt, *Women Movements in America*, p.59.
15. *Ibid*.
16. Friedman, *Our American Sisters*, p.5.
17. Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, p.13.
18. Friedman, *Our American Sisters*, p.5.
19. Sabra Butt, *Women Movements in America*, p.59, Besides these women, in the related literature, many other names of American women are mentioned who struggled during the revolution. Some of them are Patience



- Wright, Molly Pitcher, Margaret Corbin, etc.
20. Friedman, *Our American Sisters*, p.6.
  21. Quoted in Deckard, *The Women's Movement*, p.245.
  22. Quoted in Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, p.15.
  23. Sabra Butt, *Women Movements in America*, p.61.
  24. *Ibid*, p.62.
  25. *Ibid*, p.63.
  26. *Ibid*, p.64.
  27. Friedman, *Our American Sisters*, p.8.
  28. Gerda Lerner, "The Lady and the Mill Girl" Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson" in Esther Katz & Anita Rapone (eds.), *Women's Experience in America*", New Jersey, 1980, p.87.
  29. Sabra Butt, *Women's Movements in 20th Century America* p.69.
  30. Barbara Deckard, *The Women Movements*, p.248.
  31. *Ibid*.
  32. Keith Melder, "Ladies Beautiful Organized Women's Benevolence in Early 19th Century America" in Esther Katz & Anita Rapone (eds), *Women's Experience in America*, p.107.
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  35. *Encyclopedia Americana*, vol.27, Danbury, 1981, p.546.
  36. Barbara Deckard, *The Women's Movements*, p.246.
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  39. Nancy Woloch, *Women And The American Experience*, New York, 1984, p.127.
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  41. Janet Zollinger Giele, "United States", p.308.
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  50. *Ibid*, p.248.
  51. Ellen Caral Dubois, “Women’s Rights before the Civil War” in Jean E. Friedman, et.al. (eds), *Our American Sisters*, p.231.
  52. Qurat-ul-ain, *Women In American Politics*, p.9.
  53. Barbara Deckard, *The Women's Movements*, p.252.
  54. *Ibid*.
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  56. Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, p.42.
  57. *Ibid*.
  58. Qurat-ul-ain, *Women In American politics*, p.10.
  59. *Ibid*.
  60. Ellen Carol “Women’s Rights before the Civil War” in Jean E Friedman et.al.(eds), *Our American Sisters*, p.231.
  61. Qurat-ul-ain, *Women In American Politics*, p.10.
  62. *Ibid*.
  63. Quoted in Sabra Butt, *Women's Movement in 20th Century America*, p.71.
  64. *Ibid*, p.88.
  65. Eugene A. Hecker, *A Short History of Women's Rights*, Connecticut, 1971, p.158.
  66. *Ibid*.
  67. Giele, “United States”, p.309.
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  70. Carol Gilligan, *In A Different Voice*, Cambridge, 1982, p.128.
  71. Dubois, “Women’s Rights Before Civil War” in Friedman, *Our American Sisters*, p.232.

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75. For details about her, consult Robert E.Riegel, *American Feminists*, Lawrence, 1963, pp.83-97.
76. For details see *ibid*, pp.41-65.
77. See for details *ibid*, pp. 65-83.
78. For further details, see Linda, & Mathews, *Women's America*, p.202.
79. Sabra Butt, *Women Movement, in America*, p.70.
80. *Ibid*, p.71.
81. Deckard, *The Women's Movement*, pp.257-258.
82. Jain, "Women in the United States" in Phadnis & Malani (eds.), *Women of The World*, p.215.
83. Qurat-ul-ain *American Women in Politics*, p.16.
84. *Ibid*.
85. Deckard, *The Women's Movement*, p.263.
86. *Ibid*.
87. Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, p.178, when Wyoming celebrated its statehood in 1890, the flag honoring the occasion was presented to the Governor by her. She was named as "The mother of women suffrage in Wyoming".
88. Deckard, *The Women's Movement* p.265.
89. Giele, "United States", p.308.
90. Sabra Butt, *Women Movements in America*, p.77.
91. Such association included Charity Organization Society, General Federation of Women's Clubs, and Women's Christian Temperance Union. For details see Qurat ul ain, *American Women in Politics*, p.19.
92. *Ibid*.
93. Deckard, *The Women's Movement*, p.272.
94. *Ibid*, p.277.
95. Qurat-ul-ain, *American Women In Politics*, p.23.
96. *Ibid*, p.24.
97. Deckard, *The Women's Movement* p.262. Also discussed in Flexner, *Century of struggle*, pp.162-163.

98. *Family Encyclopedia of American History*, New York, 1975, p.1257.
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100. *Family Encyclopedia of American History*, p.1255.
101. Quoted in W. H. Chafe, *The American Women (1920-1970)*, Preface, London, 1972.
102. Woloch, *Women And The American Experience*, p.343.
103. Chafe, *The American Women*, p.27.
104. Deckard, *The Women's Movement*, p.286.
105. *Ibid.*
106. Friedman, (et.al) (ed.), *Our American Sister*, p.416.
107. *Ibid.*
108. Sabra Butt, *Women Movement in America*, p.81.
109. Friedman, (et.al), (eds.). *Our American sisters*, p.417.
110. *Ibid.*
111. Qurat-ul-ain, *American Women in Politics*, pp.25-26.
112. *Ibid.*
113. Friedman (ed)., *Our American Sister*, p.41.
114. *Ibid*, p.421.
115. Chafe, *The American Women*, p.130.
116. Maggie Humm (ed), *Feminism.. A reader*, New York, 1992, p.3.
117. Deckard, *The Women's Movement*, p.290.
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## CHAPTER 2:

# FEMINISM AND AMERICAN SOCIETY- A REVIEW OF THE CONFLICT

I'm nobody! Who are you?  
Are you nobody, too?  
Then there's a pair of us-don't tell!  
They'd banish us, you know  
How dreary to be somebody!  
How public, like a frog  
To tell your name the livelong day  
To an admiring bog!

(Emily Dickinson)

It has been already discussed that the women's movement which arose with the abolition movement (1860) scored a victory in form of suffrage (1920) in alliance with the progressive movement. The era that followed 1920s was marked by the ideological drive towards privatism.<sup>1</sup> Men learned that money making was extremely important. Women were told that the best thing for them was to produce children and to stay at home. In the 1930's the Great Depression politically awakened and radicalized millions of women but their central concern was full employment and not women's rights<sup>2</sup>. Discouraging remarks about working women were heard. From 1940-45, the women started their own long march toward liberation. The changes during that period were astonishing and some of them were :

1. Five percent rise in number of women at work.
2. Notable rise in wages.
3. Twice as many housewives at work.
4. Four times as many women in unions.
5. A visible change in the public attitude toward women<sup>3</sup>.

World War II was clearly a watershed in the history of American Women. With the war, a big change came in the lives of the American women. The war provided the principal catalyst for this change. The war forced consideration of public affairs at every level. Women participated in these affairs through communing activity, paid employment and interaction with the war government<sup>4</sup>.

The image of women in the American society was changing. In the 1930's women were told to stay at home. Working out-side was considered unnatural. In the 1940's a big section of the media propagated that working outside the household is not only natural but also patriotic. People's attitudes changed with the positive and effective propaganda of the media. By 1935, a poll showed that 80 percent of the Americans thought that it was wrong, especially for married women, to work and by 1942, 71 percent thought that more married women could and should be employed<sup>5</sup>.

During the war women joined the labour force because they were needed to replace men. During these years, the female labour force increased by 57 percent and the proportion of women who were employed leaped from 25 to 36 percent<sup>6</sup>. These changes in the rise of working women reflected both socio-economic necessities and changing attitudes and it helped changed attitudes of the people. Thus, during the war, women became an indispensable part of the life of the country. But the anti-women groups, the Catholic Church and the government continued to push women back to a subservient level. Women were put on the lowest levels of teaching, nursing and secretarial position but were not given positions of power in business or politics<sup>7</sup>. The popular media and the big-selling magazines such as McCall, Life and Ladies Home Journal were also playing a negative role during the 1950's. No national or world issues were discussed in these magazines because these topics were supposed to be beyond women's understanding and interest. These magazines also carried a warning of the dangers of being dried up career women. The articles were generally titled, "Femininity

Begins at Home”, “Having Babies while you’re young” “How to snare a male”, “Cooking to me is poetry”<sup>8</sup>. In 1950 more and more people wanted to discuss their family problems. Psychologists too worked as anti-women groups. They opined that women were created to be biologically and psychologically dependent on men, they could not be happy in independent careers<sup>9</sup>. Some women colleges also worked in this direction to prevent women from becoming conscious of their roles. One such college argued that “we are not educating women to be scholars but “we are educating them to be wives and mothers”<sup>10</sup>”.

The most important type of economic discrimination to increase in this period was the segregation of women into ‘women’s jobs’. The increasing number of women at work have gone largely into sex-typed jobs, thus lowering the wages paid in occupations. Specifically from 1950 to 1960, overt discrimination forced 48 percent of the total increase of women in the labour force into occupations that were 70 percent or more female. A 59 percent increase was noted in occupations in which over half of the workers were women<sup>11</sup>.

Brain washing by various groups and the popular media worked effectively. Women worked because of economic necessity but they still worked as low paid workers at sex - segregated jobs with less chances of promotion or job security. This propaganda worked in preventing the women’s liberation movement from becoming active in the 1950’s. So there was no progress in the movement from 1940 to 1960. The reasons for this stagnation were that the parties that existed like NAWSA, the Business and Professional Women’s Club, the League of Women Voters etc., were not interested in the women’s liberation



movement as, they had their own primary social, professional or reformatory interests as higher priority goals. Another reason was the continuing strong influence of conservative anti-women groups. Women's liberation was advocated by the National Women's party and by the old leftists - communists and socialist workers together. But these groups were not only small, they also enjoyed least significant influence<sup>12</sup>.

Thus, the post war years became a period of testing a time of transition, in which women in particular and the society at large, sought to determine the proper boundaries of women's sphere. The impact of the World War II on American women was a mixed one that precludes sweeping generalizations about war and social change<sup>13</sup>. On the one hand, it provided unprecedented employment opportunities, higher wages, public recognition of the women worker and an easing of restrictions in some areas<sup>14</sup>. On the other hand, it also contained powerful forces which put checks upon women's aspirations and options<sup>15</sup>.

To conclude, the debate over women's place in the 1940's and 1950's failed to result in a new definition of women's identity, as some had hoped. But it did provide a framework within which it became possible for women to judge the actions. As the nation entered the decade of the 1960's it seemed clear that any solution to the women problem would entail the creation of new roles for both men and women, rather than the restoration of a rigid division of labour based on sex<sup>16</sup>. The home remained a central focus of female life, but it had ceased to be the only focus. The anti-feminists ignored the fact that the women were already in the process of creating a new sphere for themselves. The growing frequency with

which women accepted the prospect of entering the world beyond the home created the backdrop against which the drive for equality would revive in the 1960's<sup>17</sup>.

The norms established for women in the society in the 1920s were revived in the 1950s after the interruptions caused by the events of the Great Depression and the World War II, and they also provided the setting for the emergence of the women's liberation movement. In contrast to the concepts of educated motherhood and "wife - champion" the new ideal defined "Women as person"<sup>18</sup>, and she was to find fulfillment not in the role of mother or wife but in her own personal accomplishments. The experience of women dramatized the process of change. Just as World War II had served as a catalyst to behavioural change among women, the ferment of the sixties served as a catalyst to the ideological change in the society. However, in the beginning of 1960, feminism was a topic of interest only to a small minority of American middle class Women, but over the next few years, feminism became a major item on the national agenda. The revival of feminism initially followed two different paths leading to women's rights as well as women's liberation. By the late 60s, however, those distinctions had blurred and supporters began to take about "the womens movement" or "feminism" without dividing it into two branches<sup>19</sup>.

Demographic changes which had been gathering force over the course of the twentieth century, were important in fostering the revival of feminism. Women were living longer, bearing fewer children and enjoying increased access to education. They were working in far greater number outside the home. Marital

instability, notably the dramatic rise in divorce, meant that women could no longer assume that the roles of wife and mother would provide the primary identification of their entire lives<sup>20</sup>. All these changes reinforced each other to produce very different life patterns for postwar women than those of their mothers and grandmothers. These changing social realities helped to foster the revival of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s.

It is, however, arbitrary to date the beginning of major social movements. Several events set the stage for the revival of feminism as a national issue in the early 1960s. President John F. Kennedy, soon after his election in 1961, established the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women. Its establishment brought together women and men concerned about women's issues; although its final recommendations were rather limited, just the fact of its existence raised expectations that women's issues were going to be addressed<sup>21</sup>. Created at the urging of Esther Peterson, a member of Kennedy's campaign staff and his appointee as the head of the Woman's Bureau<sup>22</sup>, the short-lived commission produced several radical reports which thoroughly documented women's second class status<sup>23</sup>. The aim of this project was to repay all women who had worked for Kennedy's election. The commission was followed by the formation of a citizen's advisory council and fifty state commissions<sup>24</sup>. Most commission members were women who possessed leadership skills learned from their long association with labour struggle, political parties or one of several established groups such as the National Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW) which provided a potential leadership base for a social

movement<sup>25</sup>. Many of these commissions produced reports that documented the extent of discrimination against women and their lack of opportunities and rights. The report of the commission was made public in 1963 and during the same year, Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique was published. So, for the revival of feminism, the year of 1963 can be marked as a watershed. These events triggered a widening public discussion of women's issues.

Friedan's book became an instant best-seller that provided the reader with a powerful indictment of the ideology that forced women into the role of full time housewife<sup>26</sup>. The book's major strength can be pointed out in its description of the psychological costs of such a limited life. Writing with eloquence and passion, Friedan traced the origins of women's oppression to a social system which persistently denied women the opportunity to develop their talents as individual human beings<sup>27</sup>. Friedan pointed out that the core of the problem of women was not sexual but a problem of identity. She also pointed out that while men had abundant opportunities to test their mettle, women saw their entire lives circumscribed by the condition of their birth and were told repeatedly "that they could desire no greater destiny than to glory in their own femininity<sup>28</sup>." If a woman had aspirations for a career, she was urged instead to find a full measure of satisfaction in the role of housewife and mother. Magazines insisted that there was no other route to happiness; consumer industries glorified her life as home maker; and psychologists warned her that if she leaves her position in the home, the whole society would be endangered<sup>29</sup>. As a result, she was imprisoned in a comfortable concentration camp, preventing from discovering who she really was

as an individual by a society which told her only what she could be<sup>30</sup>. Friedan's manifesto urged women to reach beyond the comfortable concentration camp of the home and find added fulfillment to careers. The book prompted a surge of activism unseen since the women's suffrage movement, setting in motion a second wave of feminism that exerted tremendous influence over the next three decades<sup>31</sup>. The book spoke to millions of women in a fresh way, driving home the message that what had previously been perceived as only a personal problem was in fact a woman problem, rooted in a set of social attitudes that required change if a better life was to be achieved.

The Commission on the Status of Women prepared a report in October 1963. This report was important because it was the first official thorough study of the status of women in the United States. The report touched all the key issues that would dominate legal and social change during the next decade. The Commission also suggested the elimination of laws discriminating against women in the marriage relationship and in the dissolution of marriage<sup>32</sup>. The report reflected the ideological limitations of the liberal consensus by assuming a rapidly growing economy rather than a redistribution of existing resources<sup>33</sup>. This meant neglecting the socio-economic conditions which forced many poorly educated and minority women with young children to seek work. The Commission and its committees concentrated on white highly educated potential career women<sup>34</sup>. The report of the Commission had a moderate tone. Its recommendations included greater availability of child care services, removal of the remaining property law restrictions, greater opportunities for women in politics and equal opportunity in

employment, and it also recommended no enforcement procedures, voluntary compliance was to be relied upon<sup>35</sup>. The report also assumed women fundamentally responsible for home making and child and child rearing even if she also works outside the home, at the same time it also favoured the removal of all barriers to women's full participation in American Society. The Commission said that women had primary responsibility for family life just as men had primary responsibility for family support and in their families, women were the transmitters of the central values of their culture. The Commission urged that the legal inequities such as bars against jury services and restrictions on married women's rights should be ended. The Commission backed day-care programmes, tax-deductions for the child care expenses of working mothers and an end to sexual inequities in social security benefits<sup>36</sup>. It pointed out a wide array of injustices and proposed a long list of remedies.

Thus when the report was prepared, it had completed its investigations of women's employment, legal and social status and it was ready to propose services that would enable women to continue their rolls as wives and mothers while making a maximum contribution to the world around them<sup>37</sup>. Two of the Commission's recommendations had immediate impact on the women's movement. In November, 1963, Kennedy, as the commission had urged, set up the Interdepartmental Committee on the status of women and the Citizens Advisory Council on the status of women. The first was composed of government officials and the other composed of private citizens, was to play an important role in pressurising the government to live up to its official non-discriminatory

position<sup>38</sup>.

After the publication of Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* and the presentation of the report of Presidential Commission on the Status of Women; another equally important influence feeding the women's movement came from the burgeoning drive for civil rights. The Civil Rights Movement became the catalyst and model for women's liberation movement. It has been observed that since both abolition in the nineteenth century and civil rights in the twentieth century preceded a feminist movement, the suggestion frequently arises that the movement for black equality somehow 'caused' the women's movements<sup>39</sup>. Once before, when working for justice for black slaves in the abolitionist movement (1830s-1870s), a handful of white middle-class women had gained experience in organising collective action in which they also gained a belief in human rights which they used to justify the demand for equality for themselves<sup>40</sup>. A similar process took place in the Civil Rights Movements which triggered the foundation of Women Liberation Movement. Either women's rights ideologies are considered a logical and obvious out growth of the black's rights ideologies or women are seen as applying attitudes towards blacks to their own social position<sup>41</sup>. The Civil Rights Movement had brought heightened self-awareness and protest tactics to students and also to women. Although it was true that blacks and women had strikingly different problems, they suffered from modes of oppression which in some ways were similar. For women as well as blacks, the denial of equality occurred through the assignment of separate and unequal roles. Both were excluded from social and economic opportunities on the grounds that assertive

behaviour was deviant. The principal theme of the Civil Rights Movement was the immorality of treating any human being as less equal than another on the basis of a physical characteristics, and that theme spoke as much to the condition of women as to that of blacks<sup>42</sup>. In its tactics its message and its moral fervor, the Civil Rights Movement provided inspiration and an organizational model for the activities of women. As women got involved in Civil Rights Movements, they became more sensitive to the demands of the blacks, who too suffered from second class status, thus women became aware of their own inferior social standing. Women who participated in efforts for black equality began to ask for those same rights for themselves. They were quick to note that the stereotypical image that blacks were happy in their place had a parallel in the feminine mystique<sup>43</sup>.

Thus, just as the Civil Rights Movement would move from brotherhood to black power, the women's movement too would shift from partnership to a war between the sexes. But in their origins, both movement believed that their demands were just and in everyone's best interest and their success was therefore assured<sup>44</sup>.

The drive for women's liberation surged to national prominence in the late sixties. Women who were not content simply to contemplate their own consciousness, but wanted some action, turned towards the respectable, conservative women's rights organizations, of which the most prominent was the National Organization of Women; formed in 1966 by Betty Friedan to spearhead the drive for legal and economic reforms. NOW was the first feminist organization



in almost fifty years and was founded to focus women's efforts and to provide a vehicle for orderly change of social institutions.

NOW best represented the women's rights branch of feminism. Composed mainly of professional women who had long been active in politics and public life, its members considered themselves a part of civil rights organization working for women. Their main goal was in the words of their Statement of Purpose, "to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men<sup>45</sup>". There was no reason, NOW argued, to examine conditions, the extent of discrimination was already documented. Nor was there any cause for merely encouraging women's participation in the work force, larger number of women were already employed and they needed immediate assistance to get better-paying jobs and long over-due promotions<sup>46</sup>. NOW adopted a conventional pattern of organisation, with formal rules and a hierarchy of offices and government. NOW's tactics included protests, setting up task forces to make recommendations about discrimination against women in education, in employment and various other fields. It campaigned actively to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment and to end discrimination against women not only in employment but in financial practices, education, public accommodations, marriage and divorce laws, abortion laws, welfare and other fields<sup>47</sup>. In short, NOW supported primarily by well-educated professional women, represented a reformist approach to equality and acted on the assumption that the social structure could be changed from within through legislation and persuasion<sup>48</sup>. A

number of other women's groups and organization were founded in quick succession. The Women's Equity Action League (WEAL) was established in December, 1968. WEAL had been particularly active in cases of sex discrimination in higher education and in the ERA campaign<sup>49</sup>. The group called Human Rights for Women, was also founded in 1968. It was a non-profit, tax-exempted organization dedicated to providing legal aid in sex-discrimination cases<sup>50</sup>. Another segment of the movement took root in female cadres of student organizations like students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee(SNCC). Beginning with consciousness-raising sessions in which women discussed the common problems they had encountered on the basis of their sex, the activists of these organizations advocated a revolutionary transformation of society based upon a change in the status of women<sup>51</sup>. All feminists were united in demanding an end to class treatment.

In the late 1960s, the women's liberation movement had become a national sensation and many people became aware of it. In September, 1968, there was a women's protest of the Miss America Contest. It was the first feminist action to get front page coverage in the media. Its purpose was to protest the treatment of women as sex objects and also to protest the image of Miss America, an image that oppress woman in every area<sup>52</sup>. By 1969 women's liberation was getting considerable publicity. During this period, groups were forming throughout the country. Sometimes they were the result of a specific events; sometimes a women active in one area moved to another and organized a group. The attempt to make it

a national movement was made in the late 1960s. A meeting of the women's groups took place in Maryland in August 1968 and then same year in Chicago<sup>53</sup>. Feminists from both social and radical groups debated over many issues especially over the value of consciousness raising. A paper was also presented that attempted to formalize and justify the issue. The Redstockings, a group started in 1969, was credited with being the first clearly articulating the function, purpose and process of consciousness raising. According to its manifesto, women, more than oppressed groups, need consciousness -raising: "Because we have lived so intimately with our oppressors, in isolation from each other, we have been kept from seeing our personal suffering as a political condition<sup>54</sup>". Thus, the Redstockings stressed on theory of consciousness-raising which was both a method for arriving at the truth and a means for action and organization. By this, they helped women to share their bitter experiences in order to adjust to their conditions. Another group formed at about the same time was the Feminists. Its objective was to develop a theoretically sound feminist analysis, to work out in practice a new, non oppressive organizational form and to take public actions<sup>55</sup>. They saw the source of women's oppression as the male-female role division and to define their goal as the annihilation of the sex role<sup>56</sup>. They said that the family is central to the oppression of women. They picketed the New York Marriage Licence Bureau, spoke against marriage as a "Slavery-like practice" and "summarized a number of laws on marriage<sup>57</sup>". They concluded that society could not destroy the inequalities between men and women until it destroyed the institution of marriage. "We must free ourselves and marriage is the place to begin<sup>58</sup>".

Early in 1970, the national media began to focus on the women's movement. The New York Times, Newsweek, New York magazine and the national television networks all devoted time or space to women's issues and within the short time of a few months the movement went from a struggling new idea to a national phenomenon<sup>59</sup>. Another sign of the movement's strength and appeal was the massive women's strike for equality, organized by NOW in August, 1970. Their demands were 24 hours child care centres and equal opportunities in education and employment<sup>60</sup>. The strike further helped to familiarize millions of American women with the existence of the women's movement.

Thus, as the nation entered the mid-seventies, it seemed that for the first time, behaviour and attitudes were reinforcing each other and the directions of events indicated that changes in family, the economy and women's definition of themselves would continue to be dominant themes in the social history of modern America<sup>61</sup>. The trends in employment attitudes towards sex and careers suggested that the world of women has altered greatly since 1930.

In a nutshell, the women's movement had gone full cycle. The women who started feminism in the nineteenth century had ideas which were similar in substance to their successors. They too wanted an end to the notion that women should occupy a separate sphere, and they too insisted on every person's right to be a human being first and a man or a woman second as Sarah Grimke, one of the Grimke sisters, wrote in 1838, "whatsoever it is morally right for a man to do it is morally right for a woman to do"<sup>62</sup>. More than a century later, the same plea

echoed across the country. Whatever the case, there could be little question at the end of the 1960's that feminism had once again become a vital force in American society, Women's liberation groups spread from the city to the suburbs. America might not be ready for the revolutionary ideas of the more extremist feminists, but more and more women were demonstrating an enhanced consciousness of the need to end discrimination based on sex. The future was uncertain, but as the nation entered a new decade, feminism exhibited a strength, vitality and appeal which had not been seen in the United States for half a century<sup>63</sup>.

## NOTES

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18. Shiela M. Rothman, *Women's Proper Place*, New York, 1978, p.6.
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31. Joannie M. Schrof, "Feminism's daughters", in *U.S. News and World Report*, vol. 115, No.12, September 27, 1993, p.68.
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33. Rochelle Gatlin, *American Women Since 1945*, London, 1987, p.44.
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35. Deckard, *The Women's Movement* p.326.
36. Woloch, *Woman and American Experience*, p.491.
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43. McGlen & Connor, *Women's Rights*, p.24.
44. Rothman, *Woman's Proper Place*, p.236.
45. Ware, *Modern American Women*, p.332.
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47. *Family Encyclopedia of American History*, New York, 1975 p.1256.
48. Chafe, *The American Women*, p.237.
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52. Deckard, *The Women's Movement*, p.334.
53. Gatlin, *American Women Since 1945*, p.128.
54. *Ibid*. p.129.
55. Deckard, *The Women's Movement*, p.338.
56. *Ibid*.
57. Sabra Butt, *Women's Movement in America*, p.120.
58. *Ibid*.
59. McGlen & Connor, *Women's Rights*, p.29.
60. Sabra Butt, *Women's Movement*, p.125.
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63. *Ibid*, pp 243-244.

## CHAPTER 3:

# FEMINIST MOVEMENT AND SURGE FOR EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

I'm a riddle in nine syllables,  
An elephant, a ponderous house,  
A melon strolling on two tendrils.  
O red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!  
This loaf's big with its yeasty rising.  
Money's new-minted in this fat purse.  
I'm a means, a stage, a cow in calf.  
I've eaten a bag of green apples,  
Boarded the train there's no getting off.  
(Sylvia Plath)

Quite similar to the battle for social rights, women's struggle to gain access to equal educational and economic opportunities has a long history. Even before the first women's rights movement, feminist writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft argued:

“Mankind should all be educated after the same model, or the intercourse of the sexes will never deserve the name of fellowship, nor will women ever fulfill the peculiar duties of their sex, till they become enlightened citizens, till they become free by being enabled to earn their own subsistence, independent of men”<sup>1</sup>.

In many respects, women's struggle for equal rights in the work force is similar to that faced in the voting arena. Like votes for women, employment and educational rights, including equal pay for equal work and the removal of legal road blocks to women's practice of some professions, all are “rights” that affect a number of women<sup>2</sup>. Resolutions calling for equal educational and employment opportunities were regularly passed at women's rights conventions in the nineteenth century. World War II and the period of the 1950s and 1960s saw a radical alteration in the kind and number of women working outside the home. The period since then has been marked by the activity of women's groups and by the enactment of sweeping anti discrimination legislation designed to improve women's employment status and educational opportunities<sup>3</sup>.

The educational and economic rights are interlinked to each other as education promote economic opportunities.

## EDUCATION

As the 1960s approached, women recognized that gender-based discrimination existed in all spheres. Many of them campaigned for John F. Kennedy for presidency who they believed would support legislation to expand women's rights. John F. Kennedy established the President's Commission on the Status of Women on December 14, 1961, as a temporary body with a mandate to report and make recommendations to the President by October 1963<sup>4</sup>. President Kennedy's Commission urged governmental support of continuing education for "home-makers"<sup>5</sup>. But while commission members recommended "imaginative counseling which could lift aspirations beyond stubbornly persistent assumptions about women's roles and women's interest" their comments about education clearly reflected the view that a women's primary role was motherhood<sup>6</sup>. For example, instead of criticizing the emphasis many colleges placed on home economics, the commission bemoaned the fact that even women's colleges have given remarkably little serious thought to the better preparation of their students for the home making most of them will do<sup>7</sup>. The commission also suggested a drastic revision in adult education so that married women could resume a field of study or a job but also made it clear that widening choices for women does not imply neglect of their education for responsibilities in the home<sup>8</sup>. The commission reported to the President that "means of acquiring or continuing education must be available to every adult at whatever point he or she broke off traditional schooling"<sup>9</sup>.

Less than a month after the commission reported to the president, a

Citizen's Advisory Council on the status of women was formed. It considered the effect of new developments on methods of advancing the status of women and recommended actions. Sex discrimination in education remained one of its concerns throughout its history, which was also evident by its special papers, its testimony at congressional hearings and the annual reports to the president<sup>10</sup>.

Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique, published in 1963, was the book that broke the conspiracy of silence about the plight of the American woman and the dehumanizing trap she was in. Friedan was thinking mainly of the educated, middle-class women, whose confinement to the home was a loss to society<sup>11</sup>. Although she contended that in modern times, such roles were too narrow for healthy, intelligent and educated women. She wrote mainly about the white, well educated home-makers who were standing by their kitchen sinks wondering if there wasn't more to life than this<sup>12</sup>.

Friedan's book had a direct impact on the consciousness of American women. Post war brides with children reaching adolescence at that time were no longer devoted to simple domesticity, but their daughters and younger sisters educating in schools and colleges were becoming involved in movements that called for more personal self-expression in defiance of social customs<sup>13</sup>. Friedan concluded by laying out her plan for the re-education of women that the education would liberate the house-wife from the suburban home and enable her to find herself, to know herself as a person by creative work of her own<sup>14</sup>. Revised educational policies would steer her toward a career, a national educational programme would allow women to resume their education and commit themselves

to professions<sup>15</sup>. Proclaiming that the drastic steps had to be taken, she proposed a new GI Bill, like the one that had offered so many veterans after WWII the opportunity for a college education<sup>16</sup>. Through her bill, further training, whether beyond college or not, would enrich the lives of American women. Thus Friedan's book in effect launched the Women's Liberation Movement. She discussed all sphere of American women in the book and education was given an important place in it.

In the aftermath of the publication of Friedan's book, Lyndon B. Johnson, after becoming president in November, 1963, began naming task forces on or partly related to education. The ideas of adult and continuing education, similar to the ideas of President Kennedy's Commission report, were included in the report of President Johnson's Task Force on Education submitted in 1964, provisions an adult basic education programmes were included in the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964<sup>17</sup>. The next year, a title on "Community Service and Continuing Education Programmes" was included in the Higher Education Act of 1965<sup>18</sup>. Under these laws, Federal Support was made available to the National Education Association of the United States for the conferences in the country which are aimed primarily at elimination of sex-discrimination in education at elementary and secondary levels<sup>19</sup>.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was unsatisfactory as far as the needs of girls and women were concerned. Coverage in any case was limited to discrimination on the grounds of race colour, religion or national origin and sex discrimination was ignored<sup>20</sup>.

Title IV and VI of Act titled as “Desegregation of Public Education” and “Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programme” (the Federal assistance and enforcement titles for education), followed the same pattern<sup>21</sup>. Thus, discrimination on the ground of sex in such areas as admission to educational institutions, admission to particular curriculums and courses and opportunities for scholarships and fellowships was not covered<sup>22</sup>.

National Organization for Women (NOW), created in 1966, went into full swing right from the beginning. It immediately got involved in several sex discrimination cases. Task forces were set up to study and make recommendations about discrimination against women in education, employment and religion<sup>23</sup>. At the second national conference of NOW in November 1967, NOW Women’s Bill of Rights was drawn<sup>24</sup>. Eight demands were made in it. Equal and unsegregated Education was included in its demands<sup>25</sup>. The Women’s Equity Action League (WEAL), incorporated on December 1, 1968, had been particularly active in the case of sex discrimination in higher education<sup>26</sup>. With the formation of NOW and WEAL, however, the focus soon turned toward education equality for women. Nothing that the near absence of women in high paying, prestigious professions and in leadership positions was a function of limited educational opportunities for women, NOW called for passage of federal and state legislation to ensure that women be educated to their full potential<sup>27</sup>.

This concern for a women’s right to achieve her full educational potential was a key element in women’s rights organizations support of title IX of the Educational Amendment Act of 1972<sup>28</sup>. Title IX of this law is “Prohibition of

Discrimination<sup>29</sup>”. It says, “No person in the United States shall on the basis of sex, be excluded from participating in, or be subjected to discrimination under any education programme or activity receiving federal financial assistance<sup>30</sup>.”

Then title IX amends the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by including sex as a prohibited area of discrimination under its title IV, “Desegregation of Public Education”<sup>31</sup>.

In 1972, after realizing the advantage of working together in individual organizations, a federation of diverse organizations named “The Federation of Organizations for Professional Women” was established to function on a continuing basis<sup>32</sup>. Its purpose was to provide member organizations with a means for combining their efforts in the interests of equality of opportunity for women in education and other careers<sup>33</sup>.

To conclude, during the 1960s, education rights were given a major priority by many of the groups involved in the women’s movement, hence forcing the official circles to ponder upon the issue. The feminist movement affected the education of women in all kinds of institutions, both undergraduate and professional. As a result of federal legislation, public efforts to reduce and eliminate discrimination against women in academic as well as in the work place, helped individuals to assert themselves, to reject age-old prejudices<sup>34</sup>. It is also opined that the women’s movement caused an enormous increase of women students at two-year colleges<sup>35</sup>. Such institutions had existed earlier, what was exciting in the seventies, however, was the rising number of women of all ages entering colleges. Not all were feminists, but in the high tide of the women’s



movement consciousness of the importance of education for women caught masses attention. Many older women who had never gone to college or had dropped out to marry, also found that they were now ready to study in order to have something of one's own<sup>36</sup>.

The rising feminist consciousness naturally created a demand for women's studies programmes in universities. San Diego State College set up the first women's studies programme in 1970<sup>37</sup>. By the beginning of 1974, these programmes were functioning at 78 institutions and about 2000 courses were offered at another 500 campuses<sup>38</sup>. The purpose of this programmes was not just to teach about women but to prepare women to face changes in the society and resulting challenges society. This activist thrust dictates a close relationship between women studies programmes and women movement<sup>39</sup>. It was also greatly realized that the well-being of whole society depends upon the well-being of American women which could be made possible by providing them educational opportunities.

## **ECONOMIC RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Different phases of women's achievements in economic opportunities and rights in the United States can be observed. It will be quick interesting to know that the official version of the Declaration of Independence (1776) was printed by a women - Mary Katherine Goddard of Baltimore<sup>40</sup>. She was the publisher a of a leading newspaper. Beside being a successful newspaper publisher, she was also the new nation's first and for many years, the only, women postmaster<sup>41</sup>.

The period of 1840 to 1900 was the period when young and primarily single women came out of their homes to seek employment in the textile industry<sup>42</sup>. Other women closely allied with the women's rights movement, sought entrance into the highest prestigious occupations as in medicine and the law. Another period of change from 1900 to 1930 was also very important. In that very period, the composition of the female labour force was changed by the influx of immigrant women into the labour force on the one hand and on the other hand by the growth of jobs for single, middle-class women<sup>43</sup>. Beside these changes there was also a change in the ideology of women active in the movement for political rights. The leaders of the movement were concerned greatly with the protection of working women from unsavory conditions at their place of employment.

World War II and the period of 1950s and 1960s saw another alteration in the backgrounds and number of women working outside the home but the legal changes designed to improve women's economic status did not occur until the early 1960s with the passage of the Equal Pay Act of 1963<sup>44</sup>. The period since then was the period of activity of women's groups and of the enactment of anti-discrimination legislation for the improvement of women's economic status.

"To create more paid jobs for women", writes Sir Arthur Lewis in his book, "The Theory of Economic Growth", "is the surest way simultaneously to raise their status, to reduce their drudgery and to raise the national output"<sup>45</sup>.

In the early 1960s, the concept of the American women as the "happy housewife" changed with reality. Twenty three million women worked in paid jobs<sup>46</sup>. These working women were not just single girls, but over half of them

were married and many had children.

However, the greatest losses suffered by women were in the decline of the number of women employed in the highest paying and most prestigious professions. Women had entered occupations which had been unattractive for men such as clerical jobs, secretaries, typists, telephone operators etc. During the 1960's, women's representation in the professions increased, but in the small percentage, in the preceding decades<sup>47</sup>.

To quote an example, in 1940, 2.4 percent of American lawyers were women and in 1960, it raised only upto 3.5 percent<sup>48</sup>.

In December 1961, John F. Kennedy created the President's Commission on the Status of Women to recommend changes to end the prejudices against women's basic rights. In terms of economic rights, the commission's importance cannot be ignored. The commission, chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt who had close relations to women active in the progressive movement, brought women together<sup>49</sup>. When its report was made public in 1963, its most concrete recommendations concerned employment and labour standards<sup>50</sup>. It recommended equal opportunities in employment. It also recommended that the president issue an Executive Order embodying the principle of equal opportunity in employment<sup>51</sup>. The report also recommended greater opportunities for part time workers to make easier the dual role of women as home maker and child rearer and also as working women outside the home. The report also favoured the retention of protective laws for women, at least until such laws could be extended to cover all workers<sup>52</sup>.

In response to commission recommendations several executive orders were issued and the Equal Pay Act was passed in the same year. But before this, there was another stirring in the country Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* was published in 1963. Friedan located the key-problem for women in their role as unpaid house wives-mothers - consumers. Her solutions was paid, meaningful work outside the home - a chance for women to achieve prestige and power the some way men do<sup>53</sup>. She concluded that employment opportunities would liberate the women from her house to identify herself.

During same year the Equal Pay Act was passed by the congress. It had been introduced by Representative Helen Gahagan Douglas in 1945<sup>54</sup>, for women to be paid equal pay for comparable work<sup>55</sup>, and was reintroduced in every session till its passage in 1963. The Equal Pay Act was the beginning of the laws dealing with sex discrimination in employment. However, when it was passed, it exempted several classes of workers and instead of guaranteeing "equal pay for comparable work" as introduced in 1945, it required in its final form only that equal pay be had for equal work<sup>56</sup>. It required all employees subject to the Fair Labour Standards Act to provide equal pay for men and women performing similar work<sup>57</sup>. The greatest impact of the Equal Pay Act was on working class women. The coverage of this act was extended to executives, administrators and professional employees in 1972<sup>58</sup>.

A milestone in equal employment opportunity for women was reached with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It outlawed discriminatory treatment based on sex and race. Title VII of the Act prohibits discrimination

based on sex in all terms, conditions or privileges of employment<sup>59</sup>.

It states that ...”it shall be an unlawful employment practice for a employer, because of race, colour, religion, sex or national origin, to fail or refuse, to hire or to discharge any individual or to discriminate against any individual with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment....or to limit, segregate or classify his employees in any way which would deprive any individual of employment opportunities or adversely affect his status as an employee”...<sup>60</sup>

Although the Civil Rights Act prohibits sex discrimination, it allows an employer to take sex into account when it is a bonafide occupational qualification (bfoq) for a particular position. Examples of legal bfoq’s include hiring only females as wet nurses or hiring only male actors to play Batman<sup>61</sup>.

To implement and enforce the Title VII of Civil Rights Act, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) was established whose five members were appointed by the president. From the beginning, EEOC officials refused to take the sex - discrimination provision seriously. The first EEOC executive director even stated publicly that the provision was a ‘fluke’ that was conceived out of wedlock<sup>62</sup>.

The EEOC’s non enforcement of the act proved the catalyst for the formation of various women’s groups and organizations. Many women discontented by the EEOC’s incompetence, met in October 1966 and formed the National Organization for Women (NOW). The leading founder was Betty

Friedan, the author of *The Feminine Mystique*.

NOW immediately got involved in several sex discrimination cases under Title VII. Task forces were set up to study and make recommendations about discrimination against women in employment. It also organized demonstrations against EEOC. Among the eight demands of NOW's Bill of Rights, the demand of enforcement of laws banning sex discrimination in employment had an important place<sup>63</sup>.

NOW and other women's groups, such as BPW and the General Federation of Women's Clubs, sent letters in order to persuade President Johnson to sign the executive order to prohibit sex discrimination by holders of federal contracts and to remedy sex discrimination within the federal government<sup>64</sup>. In October 1967, Johnson issued an executive order barring sex discrimination and other forms of bias in hiring by federal contractors<sup>65</sup>. Executive Order (EO) 11246 amended by 11375 required federal contractors to take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed and that they are treated during employment without regard to their race, colour, religion, sex or national origin<sup>66</sup>. This order became the foundation stone in emergence of equal opportunities employment in the United States.

Another women's group was created in order to gain economic equality. "Federal Employed Women" (FEW) was founded in 1968 to represent the interests of women employed at all levels in the federal government<sup>67</sup>. It was founded for the purpose of pressurising the Civil Service Commission to enforce the already existing executive order banning sex discrimination in federal

employment<sup>68</sup>.

By the start of 1970s, further steps were taken to end sex-discrimination in employment opportunities. The years 1972 and 1973 saw some significant progress in the area of equal economic and employment opportunities. In 1972, by the passage of the Equal Opportunity Act, the commission gained authority to bring civil suits directly against employers it found to be engaging in discriminatory practices<sup>69</sup>. Title VII was extended to apply to educational institutions and to government employment<sup>70</sup>.

Thus, to conclude, the period of 1960s had a favourable impact on the economic equality for women. The Equal Pay Act and Title VII provided a powerful weapon in the struggle for gaining economic rights. Prior to that period, neither women's movement tried to make progress in this sphere, but during the 1960s, many women's groups were involved in expanding the economic opportunities. Through legislation and executive branch lobbying, economic opportunities had been expanded tremendously.

Between 1960 and 1970, the proportion of women in professional services rose from 22.6 to 29.6 percent<sup>71</sup>. ~~By the~~ By the early 1970s, the ratio of working American women had risen to 44 percent<sup>72</sup>.

The popularity of the women's movement in the 1970s and its focus on women's right to work had facilitated the positive attitude towards working women. Significantly, the working women who were found in the women's Rights Movement were attracted by the "equal rights" aspect of the ideology<sup>73</sup>. In matters of pay, job's security, working conditions and fringe benefits they had

experiences of discrimination and can demand equality these areas<sup>74</sup>

## NOTES

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3. *Ibid*, p.150.
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23. Deckard, *The Women's Movements*, p.330.
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28. *Ibid.*
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42. Mc Glen and O' Connor, *Women's Rights*, p.149.
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45. Quoted in Lesseps, "International Women's year", p.135.
46. Deckard, *The Women's Movement*, p.322.
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51. Deckard, *The Women's Movement*, p.326.
52. *Ibid.*
53. Gatlin, *American Women Since 1945*, pp.116-117.
54. Deckard, *The Women's Movement*, p.326.
55. McGlen & O' Connor, *Women's Rights*, p.170.

56. *Ibid.*
57. Stencel "Women In the Work Force, p.35. The Fair Labour Standards Act of 1938 established a minimum wage for individuals engaged in interstate commerce. The law has been amended from time to time to increase the minimum rate and to extend coverage to new groups of employees.
58. *Ibid.*
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66. *Ibid.*
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68. Deckard, *The Women's Movement*, p.332.

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## CHAPTER 4:

# WOMEN RIGHTS MOVEMENT: SURGE FOR POLITICAL RIGHTS

I am a woman, hear me roar  
In numbers too big to ignore  
And I know, too much to go back and pretend  
'Cause I've heard it all before  
And I've been down there on the floor,  
No one's ever gonna keep me down again.  
Oh, yes, I am wise  
But it's wisdom born of pain.  
Yes, I've paid the price  
But look how much I gained  
If I have to  
I can do anything  
I am strong,  
I am invincible,  
I am woman.

(Helen Reddy).

Politics, understandably, provided the first test of what the suffragists had won with the enactment of the Nineteenth Amendment. Suffragists and their leaders entered the 1920s with brighter hopes, however, for many years after the passage of the amendment, women voted in smaller numbers than men. In the 1920 election only 43 percent of the eligible women voted<sup>1</sup>. Women's political activities gradually began to vanish from the political scene after the passage of Equal Rights Amendment in 1923. Women seemed to be contented with their basic right to vote. During the period of 1920s and 1930s, there were no large number of women entering the U.S. House of Representatives. The three women elected in 1924 were to be the first professional congresswomen and their names were Florence Kahn of California, Edith Nourse Rogers and Mary Norton from New Jersey<sup>2</sup>. Women's most visible political impact was manifested during the Depression years of the Roosevelt administration. In those years, many women who had been leading the feminists were appointed to responsible posts. Frances Perkins held a cabinet level post as Secretary of Labour, Florence Allen was appointed Judge of a U.S. Circuit Court of Appeal and Mary Dewson organised a Women's Division in the Democratic Party<sup>3</sup>. Ruth Rhode and Florence Horrigan were made ambassadors<sup>4</sup>.

In the 1940s and 1950s, 34 women were elected to the House of Representatives and most of them were the widows of congressmen i.e., 13 out of 34<sup>5</sup>. Frances Bolton, Margaret Chase Smith, Helen Douglas, Leonor Sullivan, Edith Green and Marilha Griffith were the few powerful women with long standing careers<sup>6</sup>.

Despite the increase in their representatives in the House, progress for women in politics was slow due to the stereotyped notion that this field was reserved exclusively for men. For many women, it was simply inconceivable to even think of going into politics and for those who tried there were enormous handicaps faced in the field of politics. The barriers remained as a result of continuing misconceptions about the abilities of women to participate as effectively as men in politics. In particular, many doubted the capacity of a woman to be as "hard-nosed" as a man<sup>7</sup>. For the most part politics had been viewed traditionally as a male dominated activity.

In the 1960s, the growth of the women's movement resulted in an increasing role for women in politics. In that period, increasing social tension, declining school standards and industrial hardships sent many white working class women to participate in politics<sup>8</sup>. A major increase in the number of women running for and winning elections to public offices did not occur until the early 1970s but in the 1960s, women politicians sympathetic to feminist demands found that they finally had an active constituency and this allowed them to push for pro-women policies with a greater chance of success<sup>9</sup>. In the late 1960s, arena of politics was further supplemented by the students and Civil Rights Movement. Women, both middle class and working-class were subsequently keen participant<sup>10</sup>. Many college students got involved in the Civil Rights Movement. Organizing and protesting became a way of life for many on campus hence introducing new methodologies in struggle for rights.

An outgrowth of the rebellious sixties was a revived movement for



women's rights<sup>11</sup>. The most outstanding development in the legal and political status of women since 1960 was the rise of a new feminist movement. Feminism educated women to use political methods for accomplishing private goals in the family or local community<sup>12</sup>.

Campaigning and office holding and access to elective and appointive office had always received greater attention in order to gain expanded political rights. In 1960, there were only 15 women out of 435 in the House and 2 out of 100 in the Senate<sup>13</sup>. Women had never been considered for the presidency or to be a supreme court justice Federal Judges were also predominantly male<sup>14</sup>. The only woman to be elected as a governor in 1960 was Lurleen Wallace who had full powers as a governor<sup>15</sup>. Between the period of 1916 and 1969, a total of 69 women were elected to the US House of Representatives<sup>16</sup>. Out of 435 members, 17 was the largest number of women serving at any single instance<sup>17</sup>. The 88th congress (1963-64) had twelve (12) women members and the 91st (1968-69) had only 10<sup>18</sup>.

After the election of John F. Kennedy as president in 1961, the new director of the Women's Bureau, Esther Peterson, strongly advocated creation of a commission on women. Under her supervision, the President's Commission on the status of women became the center piece of the administration's actions regarding women serving to effect specific changes and to heighten public awareness of women's issues<sup>19</sup>. Kennedy's acceptance of Peterson's recommendation to establish a commission on women stemmed at least partially from his political need to do something for women<sup>20</sup>. The creation of the President's Commission

provided a new-found legitimacy to the struggle against discrimination based on sex and initiated a national discussion that continued into the 1980s<sup>21</sup>. As Betty Friedan wrote in 1963, “the very existence of the President’s Commission on the status of women creates a climate where it is possible to recognize and do something about discrimination against women, in terms not only of pay but of the subtle barriers to opportunity”<sup>22</sup>. The Commission’s 1963 report, *American Women*, together with other publications, documented the extensive remaining inequalities in women’s status and opportunities, and promoted the formation of similar commissions in all the states<sup>23</sup>. These Commissions were often urged by politically active women and were composed primarily of women. The activity of these state commission brought together many knowledgeable, politically active women who otherwise would not have worked together around matters of direct concern to women<sup>24</sup>. The Commission reported its belief that “public office should be held according to ability, experience and effort, without special preferences or discriminations based on sex”<sup>25</sup>. Its report also recommended increased appointment of women to important political positions. Commission members also recommended promulgation of an executive order:

- ◆ designating a cabinet officer to implement and make progress reports, on whether the commission’s recommendation were being followed in the agencies of the federal government;
- ◆ establishing an interdepartmental committee to assure coordination among departments in reaching these goals; and,
- ◆ creating a citizens advisory committee to meet with the designating

cabinet officer to further assure compliance as well as to suggest further courses of action<sup>26</sup>.

Thus, the President's Commission marked a political watershed and for women it became the subject of political discourse. The establishment of the commission was a kind of consolation prize to the women of the Democratic Party, whose efforts in the 1960 campaign were rewarded with only a few low-level appointments<sup>27</sup>. Before the establishment of the Commission, Women's politics was confined to voluntary service in the community, feminism to a few veterans of the Women's party who introduced the Equal Rights Amendment before congress year after year<sup>28</sup>. Thus, women's issues were not placed explicitly on the political agenda in any visible way until 1961. The Kennedy Commission marked a new beginning. It gave women's issues a prominent place on the political agenda for the first time in decades and, perhaps more importantly, put a group of women and men together and set them to thinking concertedly about questions of gender<sup>29</sup>. The Commission put into operation a viable network of women's politics by sponsoring state organizations and providing for extended careful considerations. It provided an institutional base for the revival of feminism.

In the passage of Equal Pay Act of 1963, Edith Green, long-time advocate of equal rights for women, was instrumental in getting the act passed. She reflected: She says "To get it passed took eight years, eight years to persuade congress that a woman doing identical work with a man ought to be paid the same salary",<sup>30</sup>.

Green totally rejected the notion that the lack of women in politics was due to their family duties. She was of the view that women were the victims of a form of psychological warfare systematically waged by men who consider the political world their exclusive domain<sup>31</sup>.

Another major stimulus was the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. That was the book which pulled the trigger of history. The influence of the book was unanticipated. Friedan was able to transform a personal problem into first a social problem then into a public cause and ultimately into a political capital. The book stimulated many women to question the status quo and some to suggest to Friedan that a new organization be formed to attack their problems in order to become active in political sphere.

Then, in 1964, the criterion of sex was added to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. It was a major victory for women. The inclusion of women in the act as proposed by Representative Howard W. Smith of Virginia<sup>32</sup>. Martha Griffiths, one of the most outspoken feminists in the Congress, seconded Howard Smith. She had worked for laws barring sex discrimination throughout her tenure<sup>33</sup>. She attacked Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), commission set up to enforce Title VII of Civil Rights Act, on the floor of Congress on June 20, 1966, labeling its attitude towards the sex provision as "specious, negative and arrogant"<sup>34</sup>.

Thus, the President's Commission report, the Equal Pay Act and the 1964 Civil Rights Act provided some legal weapons against sex discrimination. All these events led to the creation of National Organization for Women (NOW) in

1966. A reform organization, NOW battled for “equal rights in partnership with men” by lobbying for legislation and testing laws in the courts<sup>35</sup>. NOW was founded in order to integrate women into the public-political sphere. It was the first explicit feminist organization since the suffrage era.

NOW, besides other objectives, also focused its efforts in urging fuller political rights for women. For example, in one of NOW’s first letters to prospective members, its purpose was explained:

to initiate or support action, nationally or in any part of this nation, by individuals or organizations, to break through the silken curtain of prejudice and discrimination against women in government...the political parties the judiciary...and in every field of importance in American society.<sup>36</sup>

In the early years of its existence, NOW propounded a legalistic brand of feminism, demanding equality of opportunity and speaking to the concerns of the educated relatively affluent professional women who comprised its initial constituency<sup>37</sup>.

At NOW’s second national conference in November 1967, the NOW’s Bill of Rights was passed and it demanded measures to alleviating discrimination in the economic, educational and social spheres. Nowhere among its specific goals, however, was a specific call for additional political rights. The absence could largely be attributed to the fact that the political inequalities experienced by the women’s rights activists were quite different from those encountered by leaders of the early women’s rights and suffrage movements<sup>38</sup>. While a variety of laws and

practices kept women out of jobs or hampered their abilities for advancement in the 1960s, women enjoyed most basic political rights<sup>39</sup>. Advocacy for the legalization of abortion by NOW in 1967 led to the withdrawal of several members who organized themselves into the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL) in 1968. In founding WEAL, Dr. Elizabeth Boyer Limited the organization's objectives to the attainment of equality through the full enforcement of existing laws and the passage of anti discriminatory legislation<sup>40</sup>. Since 1968 WEAL members' activities had been confined largely to working for legislative and legal changes that attack discrimination against women in different areas of life<sup>41</sup>. The League concentrated on legal and economic aspects of equality of opportunity.

Federally employed women (FEW) and Human Rights for women were also founded in 1968 whose purposes were the assistance of sex-discrimination cases<sup>42</sup>.

In the early 1970s, to improve the political status of women, the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC) was formed in 1971 to seek the development of the political potential of women. Shirley Chisholm and Bella Abzug, members of the Congress in 1968 and 1970 respectively, were among the founders of NWPC<sup>43</sup>. The basic goal of Caucus was "to awaken, organize and assert the vast political power represented by women by:

- ◆ organizing state and local caucuses around the country;
- ◆ raising women's issues at every level of the political process;

- ◆ electing to office women committed to women's concerns;
- ◆ educating women through political action<sup>44</sup>”.

NWPC was responsible for raising campaign funds seating more women delegates at political conventions and for seeking caucus endorsement favourable to its positions on issues of women's equality<sup>45</sup>.

As a political organization, NWPC was unique in its multi-partisan base. To fulfill its commitments to increased representation in the political parties, it maintained special Democratic and Task Forces<sup>46</sup>. It represented a new form of political activity based on reaching the grass roots level mobilizing more and more women in political activities.

Another politically oriented group, the Feminist Party was formed in New York in November 1971 by Florynce Kennedy, Bill Baird and others<sup>47</sup>. It planned to pursue the major political parties to incorporate feminist views and to select sympathetic male and female candidates.<sup>48</sup> The Feminist Party represented a demand for the reallocation of traditional political power in the society.

Women who had never been before politically active began to discuss the women's issues and sometimes to form groups. An important landmark in this regard was Older Women's Liberation (OWL) which was formed in the early 1970s and took part in the second congress held in that year to unite women.<sup>49</sup>

Despite of all these improvements in political sphere, stereotypes continued to act as barriers to the full participation of women. For example, a view still exists that the roles of wife and mother and active participant in politics do

not mix. In a Lou Harris poll conducted in 1972, 55 percent of all women and 62 percent of all men agreed with the statement that “To be really active in politics, women have to neglect their husbands and children<sup>50</sup>.”

However, during the 1960s, women sought greater involvement in the mainstream of American political activity which was evident by the participation of large numbers of women in the new political movements of the 1960s and early 1970s. As during the 1960s increased number of women began to recognize that the volunteer activities - to which they devoted themselves were not real solution to their problems and there was need to bring about structural changes to solve those problems<sup>51</sup>. Their change in the participation of political activities was also reflected in the actions of the more traditional women’s groups. To ensure political equality, it was important for women to participate as judges, legislators and executive officials at all levels of government<sup>52</sup>. In all these roles, women had made great efforts at the local and state level. Involvement in local politics was more easily reconciled with home and family responsibilities while state level political offices were considered to require much greater commitment of time and money.

Perhaps the greatest evidence that the women’s movement of 1960s had made an impact was the increased attention it received from politicians. The feminists demands had been largely ignored by government leaders for more than four decades after the passage of the suffrage. A change began to appear in the 1960s. For example, the Equal Rights Amendment to the constitution was brought before the House of Representatives in that period<sup>53</sup>. In fact, the most substantial



effort to overcome disabilities being faced by women was the struggle for the passage of ERA. In 1963, the President's Commission, the Women's Bureau the League of Women Voters all opposed the amendment<sup>54</sup>. But by the revival of feminism interest in the amendment also revived. Passage of the ERA was included in NOW's Bill of Rights in 1967, in the late 1967, President Johnson favoured the amendment and Nixon also came out in support during the 1968 campaign<sup>55</sup>. Nixon's Task Force on the Status of Women and the Citizen's Advisory Committee, both strongly supported the passage<sup>56</sup>.

Also, during the 1960s a significant thrust of the new feminism was focused on the use of political and legal channels to improve the individual status of women in American society<sup>57</sup>. The elimination of gender differences in various practices and procedures enabled individual women to improve both their socio-economic and political status. Since political life represents the highest rank system of power in society, hence, for women to enter the networks of political activity, they have to progress in political careers by all the routes men take or they have to associate with other women to form powerful pressure groups.

In other words, achieving a high socio-economic position in society is necessary but not sufficient, women have to learn how to make political gains. Unless they are in a position of power and influence, American women will continue to have a weaker position in social set up.

## NOTES

1. Deckard, *The Women's Movement*, p.285.
2. *Ibid*, p.293.
3. Giele, "United States", p.312.
4. Deckard, *The Women's Movement*, pp.294-295.
5. *Ibid*, p.307.
6. *Ibid*, pp.307-308.
7. McGlen & O' Connor, *Women's Rights*, p.87.
8. Qurat-ul-ain, *Women in Politics*, p.27.
9. Deckard, *The Women's Movement*, p.350.
10. Qurat-ul-ain, *Women in Politics*, p.27.
11. *Ibid*, p.28.
12. Giele "United States", p.317.
13. Sabra Butt, *Women's Movement in America*, p.107.
14. *Ibid*.
15. *Ibid*.
16. Gatlin, *American Women since 1945*, p.37.
17. *Ibid*.

18. *Ibid.*
19. Cynthia E. Harrison, A “New Frontier” for Women: The Public Policy of the Kennedy Administration” in Friedman, (et.al), *Our American Sisters*, p.496.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid*, p.508-509.
22. Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, p.361.
23. Vicky Randall, *Women And Politics*, London, 1982, p.148.
24. Jo Freeman, “Origins of the Women’s Movement” in Joan Huber (ed)., *Changing Women in a Changing Society*, pp 35-36.
25. McGlen & O’ Connor, *Women’s Rights*, p.70.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Mary P. Ryan, *Womanhood in America*, New York, 1983, p.308.
28. *Ibid*, p. 307-308.
29. *Ibid*, p.308.
30. Quoted in Deckard, *The Women’s Movement*, p.350.
31. *Ibid*, p.308.
32. Gatlin, *American Women Since 1945*, p.45.
33. Deckard, *The Women’s Movement*, p.308.

34. *Ibid*, p.382.
35. Mery Berth Norton, David M. Katzman (ed) et.al., *A People And A Nation*, vol II: Since 1865, Boston, 1986, p.959.
36. Quoted in McGlen & O' Connor, *Women's Rights*, p.70.
37. Ryan, *Womanhood in America*, p.309.
38. McGlen & O' Connor, *Women's Rights*, p.70.
39. *Ibid*.
40. Carden, *The New Feminist Movement*, p.135.
41. *Ibid*.
42. Randall, *Women And Politics*, p.149.
43. Deckard, *The Women's Movement*, p.352.
44. *Ibid*.
45. Aida K. Tomeh, "A comparative View on the Changing Position of Women in the United States" in Lupri (ed.), *The Changing Position of Women in Family And Society*, p.91.
46. McGlen & O' Conner, *Women's Rights*, p.72.
47. Carden, *The New Feminist Movement*, pp 139-140.
48. *Ibid*, p. 140.
49. Sabra Butt, *Women Movements in America*, p.128.

50. McGlen & O' Connor, *Women's Rights*, p.82.
51. Qurat-ul-ain, *Women in Politics*, p.29.
52. *Ibid*, p.30.
53. Chafe, *The American Woman*, p.240.
54. Deckard, *The Women's Movement*, p.389.
55. *Ibid*.
56. *Ibid*, pp. 389-390.
57. Qurat-ul-ain, *Women in Politics*, p.30.

## CONCLUSION

This is my letter to the world,  
That never wrote to me,\_\_\_  
The simple news that Nature told,  
With tender majesty.

Her message is committed  
To hands I cannot see;  
For love of her, sweet countrymen,  
Judge tenderly of me!  
(Emily Dickinson)

In the words of John Staurt Mill, the liberal philosopher and an advocate of rights of women, "a society's success can be measured, to a large degree, by the degree of equality attained by women".

The emancipation of women is seen as an indicator of the liberal nature of society. In other words it is generally understood that in a free society women have equal access to opportunities and lead the same public lives as men. In liberal societies women and men are considered to be equal for all purposes. What is important is that in working for improvements in education, in employment, in the general consideration they receive, women believe that they are striving to achieves freer and better environment in their societies. In this regard, women's rights movements can be termed as be one of the best embodiments of the liberal democracy, namely that social progress is possible and it depends on everyone<sup>1</sup>. Special attention must be focused on social and political status of women and special care must be taken to prevent the emergence or re-emergence of a take-it-for-granted concept that men are superior or if not superior, nonetheless, deserving of more importance than the fairer sex. The Women's Rights movement of 1960s and 1970s proven itself to be neither a fad nor a passing phase. In the United States and around the world, it is solidly based in the aspirations of millions of women for equal treatment and fairness to all human beings, regardless of sex. It is set against the background of earlier and varied efforts in numerous lands to achieve political and economic rights for women. It carries throughout the world the common message that sex need not be a barrier to either freedom or opportunity. It also underscores the fact that women are not only interested in

change but that there is some sort of imbalance between male and female and it needs to be balanced.

The women's movement can be seen as the out come of variety of ideas emanating from various sections formed by men and women of eminence as well as anonymity. They all agree that the American women like all other women of the world, are discriminated against men and are oppressed and exploited. Something must be done to save them from this exploitation.

Feminism and feminist movement of the United States in the post World War II period is the women's answer to centuries of oppression by men in the hierarchical social arrangements. The movement demands an end to hierarchy in human life and proposes that it be replaced by egalitarianism and democracy in social relations as well as in politics<sup>2</sup>. It is nothing more nor less than the advocacy of equal rights for all men as well as women.

A majority of American women, after experiencing women movements surging for equality, agree that feminism has altered their lives for the better. In general polls conducted in the early 1990s indicated strong support for feminist ideals. But these polls also suggested that a majority of women hesitate to associate themselves with the movement. As a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, Karlyn Keene has observed that more than three quarters of American women support efforts to strengthen and change women's status in society, yet only a minority, a third at most identify themselves as feminists<sup>3</sup>. Women are addressing feminist causes while rejecting the feminist identity despite of the fact that feminism present itself as a source of ultimate meaning for women.



It claims to answer the fundamental question, “Why do we suffer”<sup>4</sup>?

Two concerns were central to most variants of feminisms as it developed in the United States in the 1960s: opposition to the domination of men over women, and a belief that women share a status as members of a subordinate group<sup>5</sup>.

One of the greatest gains of the women’s movement has been establishing the freedom to think as individual social and political beings. Over and above all the changes occurring in the institutional structure of society, there was change in the cultural definition of the images of male and female. Moreover media also showed a revolutionary willingness to question the old symbols and role models of masculine and feminine. Feminists themselves had some successes in their own publishing efforts. The feminist magazine *Ms.*, edited by Gloria Steinem one of the founder of the National Women’s Political Caucus (NWPC) in 1971, was launched in 1972. It has a large circulation and covers all aspects of changing women’s roles from health, childcare, work and politics to religion. Feminist organizations had emerged to handle the growing demand for books and articles in the women’s movement. Among them more well known are KNOW, Inc., of Pittsburgh, established in 1969 and the Feminist Press, of Old Westbury, New York, which distributes materials for women’s studies courses<sup>6</sup>.

An outstanding achievement of the feminist movement in the United States during 1960s is the creation of organizations that serve the cause and advocate for women rights. These organization have enriched women’s lives and furthered the process of social change. The principle of “Sisterhood”—unity among women-

occupied a central place in the feminist ideology of the 1960s. Indeed, one of the memorable slogans of that time was that “sisterhood is powerful<sup>7</sup>”. The feminist ideals of the 1960s were a source of inspiration for the creation of women’s movement organizations. These organization began with a preference for a desire for unity among women. The new generation of women also complains of being ignored by its elders and has tried to create its own links Numerous organizations are trying to address the issues they feel have been ignored by most mainstream feminists. To name few, in El Paso, Texas where La Mujer Obrera organised Hispanic working women and in Washington D.C., where the Older Women’s League lobbied for 63 million women over 45<sup>8</sup>.

Young women are building organizations such as WHAM - Women’s Health Action and Mobilization which lobbies for affordable health care for poor women and also WIN - Women’s Information Networka “young girls’ club” career network<sup>9</sup>. These organization are established by the young women not the established feminists and they claim that they are the real force behind women’s struggle for equality .

The students are also active in establishing student organizations. Nearly every college campus now boasts a variety of grass - roots women’s student organizations. The groups such as Voice, Fearless, Womanist and Students Organizing Students have placed gender issues at the forefront of college activism<sup>10</sup>. Even at the high school level, groups like FURY - Feminists United to Represent Youth - and YELL - Youth Education Life Line are launching campaign for better sex education and fighting stereotypical female images<sup>11</sup>. One

of the coordinators of YELL, Kate Barnhart, says, “we need the support and respect of older people, but we don’t need them to be our leaders or to think for us”

All these developments clearly show that the women’s struggle towards equality in various spheres is still marching on. The feminist movement of the nineteenth century fought some of the grossest forms of inequality such as the exclusion of women from the vote and from admission to institutions of higher learning. The American feminist movement of the twentieth century presses for removal of more barriers to equality. But the full development of sex equality in America is still incomplete. Considerable gains have been accomplished and the role options for both men and women are definitely broader and more liberal than a century ago. There is a severe need for re-aligning the women movement’s priorities towards social support that would strengthen the American women’s social status. Women must be conceived as individuals in the respective sphere equally contributing towards the development of a society and an advancement of nation. Once this fact is recognized, most of the problems generally faced by women will gradually disappear. The responsibility lies not with one sex, but the human kind as a whole. It will require a lot of conscious effort, training and education to change the traditional and stereotyped roles and attitudes of men and women. The need of the time is that the lens through which the status of women is viewed must be broad enough to expose the macro-picture and the relationships between social, economic, educational and political trends on both a national and a global scale must be exposed through it.

As the greater movements of all times have influenced the course of history not only in their respective lands but have also transmitted their impact in the distant parts of the globe too, Women's Rights Movement of 1960s also paved way for initiating similar activities all over the world. The nature, scope and ideological intensity remained varied in different experiences, however, all such movements were inspired by a common goal "upholding the sisterhood", leading to equality or least to say better opportunities for women folk. The contours of all such activities in different societies are found differently shaped according to respective societal environments. But the stronger urge for better opportunities remained pivotal in all of them.

American feminism can be compared in substance and practical aspects with its European counter-part. However, the strange phenomenon in this regard was the broader scope of European movements encompassing all the aspects of human life during its struggle for equality Hence, American movement could be termed as successful in achieving the desired goals besides it was more gradual and easy to comprehend academically in terms of the political, educational, social and economic perspective. One might conclude that the period under discussion in this study corresponds with the on-going Civil Rights Movements in the United States, hence giving it more impetus along with a more systematic approach to counter the menace of sex-discrimination and the evil of gender equality.

The canvass of American feminism is still longing for more meaningful colours to complete it. There is still sexual discrimination going on in different spheres of American society, though not legally or conceptually but in practical

terms. However, the post World War II period remains more significant chunk of history, atleast defining the boundaries of struggle for coming generations to follow also leaving behind the idea that these boundaries are not static and they should be altered regularly, hence giving the message that the battle is not yet over and new fronts could be identified by every passing day.

## NOTES

1. Editorial, "Equality, Justice and the Rights of Women" in *Freedom Review*, vol. 26, No.5, Sept-Oct, 1995, p.5.
2. Marjory H. Odessky, "The Culture War" in *Humanist*, Vol.55, No.1, Jan, 1995, pp.34.
3. Wendy Kaminer, "Feminism's Identity Crises" in *The Atlantic*, vol.272, No.4, Oct, 1993, pp 51-52.
4. Katherine Kersten, "How the Feminist Establishment Hurts Women" in *Christianity Today*, vol.38, No.7, June 1994 p.24.
5. Stephanie Riger, "Challenges of Success: Stages of growth In feminist organizations" in *Feminist Studies*, vol 20, No.2, 1994, p.275.
6. *Giele*, "United States" p.335.
7. *Sisterhood is powerful* is borrowed from the famous anthology of writings from the Women's Liberation Movement edited by Robin Morgan published in 1970.
8. Monika Guttman, et. al., "Separating the Sisters" in *U.S. News and World Report*, vol 116, No.12, March, 1994, p.50.
9. Schrof, "Feminism daughters" in *Ibid*, vol 115, No.12, Sept. 1993, p.69.
10. *Ibid*.
11. *Ibid*, pp.69-70.

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## APPENDIX-I

### DECLARATION OF SENTIMENTS (1848)

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.

He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice.

He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded man-both natives and foreigners.

He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.

He has taken from her all right in property...

He has made her, morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes with impunity.... In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband....

He has so framed the laws of divorce...as to be wholly regardless of the happiness of women-the law, in all cases, going upon a false supposition of the supremacy of man....

...[1]<sup>f</sup> single...he has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it.

He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments....

He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education....

He allows her in Church, as well as State, but a subordinate position, claiming Apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry....

He has created a false public sentiment by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society, are...deemed of little account in man.

He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action[.]...

He has endeavored, in every way that he could, to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.

## **APPENDIX-II**

### **AMENDMENT XIX TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA-August 18, 1920.**

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

## **APPENDIX-III**

### **IMPORTANT SECTION OF MAJOR ANTI-DISCRIMINATION PROVISIONS (1963-64)**

#### **EQUAL PAY ACT**

No employer having employees subject to any provisions of this section shall discriminate, within any establishment in which such employees are employed, between employees on the basis of sex by paying wages to employees in such establishment at a rate less than the rate at which he pays wages to employees of the opposite sex in such establishment for equal work on jobs the performance of which requires equal skill, effort, and responsibility, and which are performed under similar working conditions, except where such payment is made pursuant to (1) a seniority system, (2) a merit system, (3) a system which measures earnings by the quantity or quality of production, or (4) a differential based on any other factor other than sex: provided that an employer who is paying a wage rate differential in violation of this subsection shall not, in order to comply with the provisions of this subsection, reduce the wage rate of any employee.

#### **EXECUTIVE ORDER 11375**

The contractor will not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The contractor will take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, color,

religion, sex or national origin. Such action shall include but not be limited to the following: employment, upgrading, demotion, or transfer; recruitment or recruitment advertising; layoff or termination; rates of pay or other forms of compensation; and selection for training, including apprenticeship. [emphasis added]

#### **CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964**

It shall be unlawful employment practice for any employer-

- (1) to fail or refuse to hire or to discharge any individual or otherwise to discriminate against any individual with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex or national origin; or
- (2) to limit, segregate, or classify his employees in any way which would deprive or tend to deprive any individual of employment opportunities or otherwise adversely affect his status as an employee, because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. [emphasis added]



## APPENDIX-IV

### NOW DECLARATION OF PURPOSE (1966)

We, men and women who hereby constitute ourselves as the National Organization for women, believe that the time has come for a new movement toward true equality for all women in America, and toward a fully equal partnership of the sexes, as part of the world-wise revolution of human rights now taking place within and beyond our national borders.

The purpose of NOW is to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men.

We believe the time has come to move beyond the abstract argument, discussion and symposia over the status and special nature of women which has raged in America in recent years; the time has come to confront, with concrete action, the conditions that now prevent women from enjoying the equality of opportunity and freedom of choice which is their right as individual Americans, and as human beings.

NOW is dedicated to the proposition that women first and foremost are human beings, who, like all other people in our society, must have the chance to develop their fullest human potential. We believe that women can achieve such equality only by accepting to the full the challenges and responsibilities they share

with all other people in our society, as part of the decision-making mainstream of American political, economic and social life....

There is no civil rights movement to speak for women, as there has been for Negroes and other victims of discrimination. The National Organization for Women must therefore begin to speak.

WE BELIEVE that the power of American law, and the protection guaranteed by the US. Constitution to the civil rights of all individuals, must be effectively applied and enforced to isolate and remove patterns of sex discrimination, to ensure equality of opportunity in employment and education, and equality of civil and political rights and responsibilities on behalf of women, as well as for Negroes and other deprived groups.

We realize that women's problems are linked to many broader questions of social justice; their solution will require concerted action by many groups. Therefore, convinced that human rights for all are indivisible, we expect to give active support to the common cause of equal rights for all those who suffer discrimination and deprivation, and we call upon other organizations committed to such goals to support our efforts toward equality for women.

WE DO NOT ACCEPT the token appointment of a few women to high-level positions in government and industry as a substitute for a serious continuing effort to recruit and advance women according to their individual abilities. To this end, we urge American government and industry to mobilize the same resources of ingenuity and command with which they have solved problems of far greater difficulty than those now impeding the progress of women.

WE BELIEVE that it is as essential for every girl to be educated to her full potential of human ability as it is for every boy-with the knowledge that such education is the key to effective participation in today's economy and that, for a girl as for a boy, education can only be serious where there is expectation that it will be used in society. We believe that American educators are capable of devising means of imparting such expectations to girl students...

WE BELIEVE that women must now exercise their political rights and responsibilities as American citizens. They must refuse to be segregated on the basis of sex into separate-and-not-equal ladies' auxiliaries in the political parties, and they must demand representation according to their numbers in the regularly constituted party committees-at local, state, and national levels-and in the informal power structure, participating fully in the selection of candidates and political decision-making, and running for office themselves.

IN THE INTERESTS OF THE HUMAN DIGNITY OF WOMEN, we will protest and endeavour to change the false image of women now prevalent in the mass media, and in the tests, ceremonies, laws, and practices of our major social institutions. Such images perpetuate contempt for women by society and by women for themselves. We are similarly opposed to all policies and practices-in church, state, college, factory, or office-which, in the guise of protectiveness, not only deny opportunities but also foster in women self-denigration, dependence, and evasion of responsibility, undermine their confidence in their own abilities and foster contempt for women.

NOW WILL HOLD ITSELF INDEPENDENT OF ANY POLITICAL PARTY in order to mobilize the political power of all women and men intent on our goals. We will strive to ensure that no party, candidate, president, senator, governor, congressman, or any public official who betrays or ignores the principle of full equality between the sexes is elected or appointed to office. If it is necessary to mobilize the votes of men and women who believe in our cause, in order to win for women the final right to be fully free and equal human beings, we so commit ourselves.

WE BELIEVE THAT women will do most to create a new image of women by acting now, and by speaking out in behalf of their own equality, freedom, and human dignity-not in pleas for special privilege, nor in enmity toward men, who are also victims of the current half-equality between the sexes-but in an active, self-respecting partnership with men. By so doing, women will develop confidence in their own ability to determine actively, in partnership with men, the conditions of their life, their choices, their future and their society.

## APPENDIX - V

### NOW BILL OF RIGHTS - 1967

#### WE DEMAND:

- I. That the US Congress immediately pass the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution to provide that "Equality of rights under law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex" and that such then be immediately ratified by the several States.
- II. That equal employment opportunity be guaranteed to all women....
- III. That women be protected by law to ensure their rights to return to their jobs within a reasonable time after childbirth...and be paid maternity leave....
- IV. Immediate revision of tax laws to permit the deduction of home and child-care expenses for working parents.
- V. That child-care facilities be established by law on the same basis as parks, libraries, and public schools....
- VI. That the right of women to be educated to their full potential equally with men be secured by Federal and State legislation, eliminating all discrimination and segregation by sex....