

Women Suffrage



(Women Suffrage Movement)

Definition: The right given by law to vote in local as well as national elections.

Overview: Women were excluded from voting right since Ab initio. Even some great democracies like ancient Greece and republican Rome were not given this right to women. In the late 19th century some pressure groups, association and organization raised their voice against this unjust practice. Prior it was emerged in Europe and North America continent but at the beginning of the 20th century it was flourished universally, in mid 20th century almost all the countries of Asia, America and Europe giving the voting right to women and also right to stand in local and parliamentary election of the nation.

A Movement Started in 1869 by the group named “The National Women Suffrage Association”. The member of the group like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony (American Women) began to fight for a universal suffrage. The movement was a decade long fight to win the right to vote for women in the United State of American and finally in 1920, American government (Senate and House of Representation) ratified the bill “Equal Rights Amendment” Then it became the Act since there.

Internationally New Zealand became the First Country (Self-Governing) which gave right to vote in parliamentary elections to women. It happened in 19th September 1893 when the governor Lord Glasgow signed a new Electoral Act in to law after that many country inspired from them like Finland in 1906, Denmark in 1915, Iceland in 1915, Russia in 1917, Germany in 1918, U. K in 1918, U.S.A in 1920,

Brazil in 1932, Turkey in 1934, France in 1944, Japan in 1945, India in 1950, Greece in 1952, China in 1953, Switzerland in 1971 giving the right to vote to the women. In 2015, Saudi Arabia became the most recent country which gives the voting right to women.

When the wave of Universal suffrage flowed around the World, some women in India also blew the movement in 1917, Margaret Cousins founded “the Women’s Indian Association” in Adyar, Madras (Today Tamilnadu).

The focused area of the Association was Social Reform, educational opportunity and equality for voting right. Founding members of the organization was Annie Besant, kamaladevi, Saralabai Naik, Herabai Tata and many more. Suffragists grew angry when no recommendation was made for Women’s enfranchisement in the Montagu-Chemsford Reforms of 1918. Activists pulled-out this struggle in “Stri-dharma” edited by Malti Patwardhan. Widely attended protest meetings were held and movement flourished throughout the Country.

In 1919, Government of India act was introduced. The Act didn’t grant women voting right but a clause included was that provinces could enfranchise women if they chose to do so. Madras was the first province which granted this right in 1921. But limited women could get voting right, specially those whose annual income was more than 10,000. Land revenues 250-500 per annum or those who recognized for their high level of Public Work, but it didn’t allow women to stand in elections. Furthermore “Government of India Act-1935” allowed only 2.5% of the women in India to Vote. After independent, India adopted democracy and Republic State policy in which article 326 of the constitution provides voting right and stands in elections to all the citizens of India.

In the 21st century most countries allow women to vote. The United Nations convention on the political rights of the women adopted in 1952 provides that women shall be entitled to vote in all elections on equal terms with men without any discrimination.

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