




## Be Mains Ready

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**Q.** Analyse the different streams of women's movements in India since independence with a special focus on the period post-1970. (150 Words)

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### Approach

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- Briefly talk about women's movement in India beginning from 19th century
- Enumerate various strands that emerged in the women's movement post-independence
- Talk about the growth in the movement during the 1970s
- Conclude by referring more recent trends in women's movement

### Answer

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Women's emancipation is an important variant of social movement in the sense that it aims to bring changes in the institutional arrangements, values, customs and beliefs in the society that have subjugated women over the years. The India of nineteenth-century was affected several evil social practices like Sati (burning of a widow on the funeral pyre of her husband), child marriage, ban on widow remarriage, polygamy etc. which were a matter of debate.

The reform movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries focused on resolving social issues. Reformists like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vidyasagar, Phule, societies like Brahmo Samaj, Prarthana Samaj and the Arya Samaj played an important role in projecting women's issues in a wider context. Political participation by women in the massive popular struggles from the 1920s onwards opened up new vistas of possibilities for women. Now they were not merely recipients of justice of the 19th century but became active supporters of the nationalist movement. Women participated in all streams of national movement from Gandhian to socialist and communist.

### Post-independence

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- After independence, with different political forces in the national movement going their own ways, the women's movement too diversified. Many women leaders became involved in women's welfare, setting up working women's hostels in cities, and women's vocational centres. There is not much evidence of women's 'struggles' in the 1950s and 1960s, marking relative inactivity in the women's movement during this phase.
- The late 1970s and 1980s were marked by a resurgence of women's struggle and the emergence of new women's groups and organisations. In the late nineteen seventies, several women's organisations emerged which were not affiliated to political parties or to trade unions. They were called 'autonomous women's organisations'. They rejected the 'welfarist' approach adopted by the previous women's organisations (many of which were set up during the preIndependence period) and adopted 'protest politics' for mobilising women on specific issues such as Anti-dowry
- Movements, Anti-rape Movement, Anti-sati Movement, deforestation and ecological movements etc. In recent time there has been a clear shift from mass campaigns to less dramatic work such as setting up of women's centres for legal aid, counselling, documentation, research, publication etc. Others brought out magazines, acted as media watchdogs scanning advertisements and films derogatory to women, raised issues related to women's health, or campaigned against foeticide, for the rights of the girl child, or for water and housing for women in the slums etc.
- Many women's groups feel that it is important not only to focus on women's problems but also on their joys, and encourage women to express themselves through music, dance and art. Social media has also become a huge mobiliser, campaigns like #metoo, #touch the pickle etc. and has raised great awareness in the personal and public domain of their lifestyle. The women's aspiration has undergone a considerable transformation since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and still, there is a long way to go.