

**UPSC Syllabus Topic : GS Paper1-Society- Role of women and women's organization.**

**Evolution of women's rights in India**

**Evolution of Women's Rights in India: Pre-Partition Era**

**Voting Rights:**

- Initiated with the Government of India Act 1919.
- Madras granted voting rights in 1921, followed by Bombay and United Provinces.
- Bengal granted in 1925 after the efforts of Bangiya Nari Samaj.
- Initially restricted by property or income criteria.

**Legislative Participation:**

- Nehru Report (1929) proposed equal civic rights.
- Advocates like Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Shareefa Hamid Ali lobbied internationally.
- Government of India Act 1935 expanded voting rights and public office eligibility.
- Women participated in the 1936-37 elections.

**Social Reforms:**

- All-India Women's Conference (AIWC) formed in 1927.
- Initially focused on education, later campaigned against child marriage and for raising age of consent.
- Advocated for reforms in religious laws for economic empowerment and inheritance rights.

**Indian Woman's Charter of Rights and Duties (1945-46):**

- Demanded equality in all areas, emphasizing economic empowerment and recognition of domestic work.
- Influenced laws like the Hindu Code Bill in the 1950s.

**Post-Partition Influences on Policies:**

- **Opposition to Religious Seat Reservations:**
  - Leaders like Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Begum Qudsia Aizaz Rasul argued against religious-based seat reservations in the Constituent Assembly.
- **Advocacy for Unified Electorates:**
  - AIWC opposed separate electorates, believing it exacerbated communal divisions.
- **Against Women's Reservation:**
  - AIWC argued against reservations specifically for women, pushing for a more integrated approach.
- **Influencing Constitutional Debates:**
  - Pivotal role in shaping post-partition policies, notably in the framing of the Constitution where reservations were limited to Scheduled Castes and Tribes.

**Way Forward:**

- **Continuation of Feminist Work:**
  - Push for more inclusive policies and legal reforms.
  - Expand economic rights, equal property and inheritance laws.
  - Address societal challenges hindering women's full participation.

The trajectory of women's rights in India, marked by early struggles and influential advocacy, underscores the ongoing need for progressive policies and societal reforms for gender equality.