



This year we are celebrating the Platinum Jubilee of our monarch Queen Elizabeth II as her reign reaches 70 years. Since the 9th of September 2015, she has been the longest reigning monarch in British history. She is an extremely important and influential figure in Britain and she has blazed a path for many women to follow in her footsteps. However, she is not the only woman who has shown great leadership skills, or worked for the good of others, or innovated in her chosen field. So in honour of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, we have picked an inspirational woman from each decade of her reign. A woman who, just like the Queen, is a woman to be looked up to and honoured in years to come.



What was Life Like for Women of Britain in the 1960s?

The 1960s was an era that saw a cultural shift in favour of women's rights: the introduction of the contraceptive pill, the first female women of state (Barbara Castle), the Equal Pay Act, the Married Women's Property Act Revision and the Abortion Act all showed signs of progress to more freedom and dignity being awarded to women in Britain. More and more women went into higher education with over 26,000 women at university in 1962. And these women were getting their voices heard as they started movements like the Women's Lib demanding equal pay and opportunity. However, it was still a deeply sexist time, and for women to gain success in any field, let alone one that was historically very male dominated was improbable - but not impossible!

Woman of the 1960s - Kathleen Lonsdale



One such male-dominated field was biology. Into this atmosphere comes Kathleen Lonsdale, who was an early pioneer of X-ray crystallography, a field primarily concerned with studying the shapes and structures of organic and inorganic molecules. She discovered through the use of this field that the benzene ring was flat, something that chemists had been arguing about for 60 years. This was an important milestone in organic chemistry. In 1945, Lonsdale was the first woman, along with microbiologist Marjory Stephenson, admitted as a Fellow to the Royal

Society. She was the first female professor at University College London, the first woman named president of the International Union of Crystallography, and the first woman to hold the post of president of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. She accepted her achievements as a pioneering woman scientist with characteristic humility. In 1966, the "lonsdaleite," a rare form of meteoric diamond, was named after her. But Lonsdale also cared about her community. She had strong opinions about scientific knowledge exchange between nations and became an active advocate for world peace. When elected a fellow of the Royal Society, she was a vocal advocate for women in science. She had served time in prison for refusing service during World War II, and became an advocate for prison reform, writing an account of her time imprisoned.

Despite the obvious challenges, Kathleen Lonsdale managed to innovate in the field of crystallography, as well as social justice and remains an inspiration not just to budding female scientists, but all women in general!



What was Life Like for Women of Britain in the 1970s?

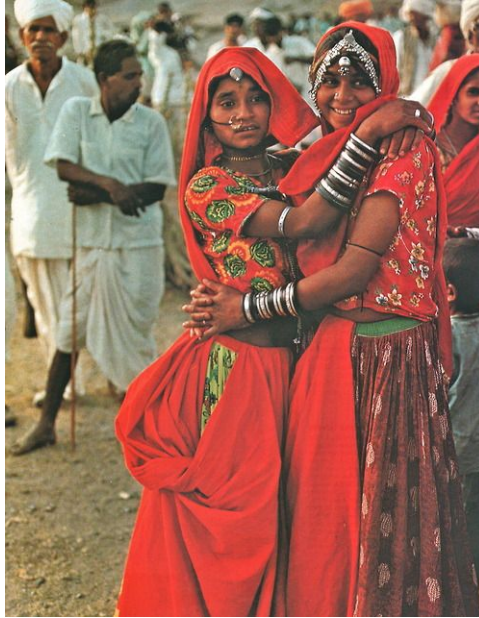
The 1970s were a time where the feminist movement was making large strides (the first Women's Liberation March took place in 1971) and it looked like women reaching equality in the work was a foreseeable goal (The Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 which was pushed through by the women's movement) In the 1970s feminist activists protested the Miss World Competition by throwing flower and smoke bombs. The protesters weren't targeting the contestants, rather the organisers and the press who published it. They found women being judged on their looks to be insulting and undermining. It was the first protest event organised by the women's movement. These and many others are a milestone of women's rights in the 1970s. Still, this was only a decade after the 1960s and these movements did sometimes have negative responses. Women still mainly worked as cleaners, in the service industry or in shops.

Woman of the 1970s - Margaret Thatcher



Margaret Thatcher was best known for being the first female and longest-serving British Prime Minister and she came to power in May 1979 – 61 years after women in the UK got the vote. Her 11 years in office meant that she was well-respected by the people at the time.

From when she was little, she had always had an interest in politics. She went to the University of Oxford and went to study chemistry and was immediately active in the politics societies in the University. After an unsuccessful first run for Parliament in 1950, Thatcher led the Conservatives to a decisive electoral victory in 1979 following a series of major strikes during the previous winter (the so-called “Winter of Discontent”) under the Labour Party government of James Callaghan. From then on she enforced reductions in expenditures on social services such as health care, education, and housing; limitations on the printing of money in accord with the economic doctrine of monetarism and legal restrictions on trade unions. Even today, she is greatly remembered as the ‘Iron Lady’ for being a strong-willed woman with her uncompromising politics and leadership style.



What was Life Like for Women of India in the 1980s?

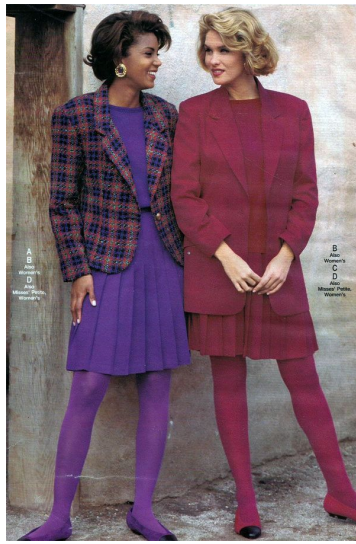
Unfortunately, we couldn't find all that much on this. There are not many sources on the Internet about women's rights in India during specific times. However, we did learn that even if there is not much specific information on this, there are still some achievements which were loud enough and acknowledged enough to be found out about. For example, Indira Gandhi served her second term as Prime Minister from 1980 until her assassination 4 years later. There was also an Anti-Rape movement and many other movement by women of India with all kinds of religious backgrounds fighting together for women's rights in India.

Woman of the 1980s - Sudha Varghese



Sudha Varghese, also known as Sister Sudha, is a social worker and Catholic nun in India from the state of Kerala who has devoted herself to the Manjhi, Musahar, Dalit and other Mahadalit castes who are considered 'untouchables'. After hearing about the conditions in which the Musahar were living in, in 1986 she moved into a complex of mud and brick houses (tola – used by the lowest castes in India) in Musahar in order to help educate the marginalised villagers. Since then Sudha has raised money, built around 50 schools and set up self-help groups which bring women, children and young people together to support one another. She teaches the groups reading, writing, sewing, nutrition, sanitation and money management and has also opened five centres which teach Musahar girls nursing. In 1989 Sudha also obtained a law degree from a school in Bangalore to help fight cases of rape, sexual harassment and violence against women.

One example of her work is a school for girls in Musaha. There, she teaches everything from maths to karate, sports, singing and yoga and many other subjects all for free. She believes in inspiring girls to believe in themselves especially in Musaha where girls are told that they are nobody. She wants her girls to believe they can be anybody.



What was Life Like for Women of Britain in the 1990s?

In the 1990s, independent taxation for women was introduced. Prior to this, the income of a married woman was added to the income of her husband and taxed accordingly. Betty Boothroyd also became the first female Speaker in the House of Commons and the Church of England ordained 32 women as its first female priests. After 15 years of serious campaigning by women's organisations, rape in marriage was made a crime. A House of Lords ruling gave equal rights to part-time workers affording working mothers more security and in 1997, the general election saw 101 female Labour MPs elected.

The first ever conviction of marital rape by a husband in the Asian community was secured by the Southall Black Sisters and the House of Lords delivered a historic judgement in the Shah and Islam case that women who fear gender persecution should be recognised as refugees. All in all, a pretty good year!

Woman of the 1990s-Helen Sharman



Helen Sharman became the first British Astronaut in May 1991, spending eight days orbiting the Earth . Having received a BSc in Chemistry at University and then a PhD she worked as a chemist until one day she responded to a radio advertisement asking for volunteers to be the first British Astronaut. At age 27, Helen was one of two Britons selected for astronaut training out of almost 13,000 applicants, making her the sixth youngest out of the 556 people who have visited space.

The mission, named Project Juno, was a cooperative arrangement and would enable the UK to send one of its people into space for the first time.

Helen underwent a rigorous selection process, which focussed on psychological and medical assessments, including tolerance to high g and motion sickness, technical understanding and practical skills. This was followed by 18 months of intensive training that included preparing for launch, feeling weightless, spacecraft operations, emergency situations, working in space and being part of a crew.

In space, Helen's tasks included medical, agricultural and chemical experiments, materials' testing, Earth observation work and operating an amateur radio link with British school students. She also took some seeds into space with her that she brought back to Earth for British school students to use as part of a UK-wide experiment to investigate the effects of space travel on the seeds as compared with a control sample.

Coping with risk and a new working environment was an ever-present requirement and teamwork was a vital element in the success of the Mission.

After her return from space, Helen spent many years communicating science and its benefits by speaking, presenting on radio and television and by organising science events for the public.

More recently, she has worked as a manager at the National Physical Laboratory in Teddington, at Kingston University London and at Imperial College London. Currently, Helen is UK Outreach Ambassador for Imperial College London.

What was Life Like for Women of Pakistan in the 2000s?



Unfortunately, we couldn't find much for this one either, which highlights how much more work there is to be done on making women's accomplishments known all over the world. We did however, find out that the Society for Appraisal and Women Empowerment in Rural Areas was established in 2004 in Pakistan. There were of course also many other movements as there always are for women's rights, it's just that much of this was silenced by other parties. Despite this, there are still remarkable women in Pakistan and one of them was Benazir Bhutto.

Woman of the 2000s - Benazir Bhutto



Born in Karachi, Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto was the daughter of President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was arrested and executed in 1979 as the result of a military coup. Z.Bhutto founded the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and became the first civil martial law administrator of Pakistan as well as the president in 1972. In 1973, Pakistan got its current constitution and Z.Bhutto was elected as the Prime Minister. In 1977, Zia-ul-Haq imposed military

martial law in Pakistan arresting Bhutto. Bhutto was hanged in 1979 with the allegation of murder.

Under Zia's leadership, Benazir and her family mostly remained in jail or under house arrest. In 1984, under foreign pressure, Zia allowed the Bhutto family to move to the UK where they remained in exile.

In 1988, Zia died in a plane crash. General elections were held in Pakistan and the PPP won a majority. Benazir as the leader of PPP became the first female elected prime minister of Pakistan (or any Islamic country). In 1990, President Ghulam Ishaq dismissed the parliament. Elections were held and Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI) won the election. Benazir became the Leader of the opposition. In 1993, President Ghulam Ishaq again dismissed the IJI government and elections were held again. Benazir became prime minister for a second term after gaining the simple majority in the election.

In 1996, Benazir's close ally, President Farooq Leghari dismissed her government. B.Bhutto became Opposition Leader for a second term. In

1999, Chief of Army Staff (CoAS), Pervez Musharraf, implemented martial law and dismissed parliament. B.Bhutto supported Musharraf behind the scene. This allowed PPP to fill the political gap created after martial law. In the 2002 elections, PPP won majority seats but many leaders had split from the party, forming their own faction and joining hands with Musharraf supporting PMLQ to form a federal government. During all those years, Benazir remained outside Pakistan, mostly in Dubai and London. She led his party from there and remained an important part of Pakistani politics. She returned to Pakistan in October 2007 despite the life threats she was facing. She got assassinated on December 27 by a suicide bomber (after surviving a previous attempt on her life after her return from exile) while addressing a political rally at Rawalpindi.



What was Life Like for Women of Britain in the 2010s?

The 2010s was a big decade for women and saw a resurgence of fourth wave feminism which focuses on the experiences of women from all backgrounds not just one specific race, sexuality or religion. It also concentrated on using social media as a tool for sharing women's experiences and so the #MeToo movement gained momentum which led to global recognition of sexual abuse or harassment against women and the challenges they face in daily life. The popularity of phrases such as 'mansplaining' and "manspreading" increased. Shared parental leave was introduced giving a mother the right to transfer periods of leave to fathers and Major General Susan Ridge became the first female senior officer in the British Army.

It was also a time of progress for the LGBTQ+ community, as in 2010 the UK Government brought in the Equality Act covering 9 protected characteristics including sexual orientation and gender reassignment. Being a gay woman in sports however, was still incredibly difficult, as 'heteronormativity, from professional sports to children's athletics, can be seen as the dominant paradigm in sports culture.'

Woman of the 2010s-Nicola Adams



Officially the UK's most successful female boxer ever, Nicola Adams became the first-ever female (and first-ever openly LGBT) Olympic boxing champion at the 2012 Games, before going on to win again in Rio, both in the flyweight division.

As an amateur, she became the first female boxer to become an Olympic champion after winning gold at London 2012, and the first double Olympic champion following a second gold medal at Rio 2016, both in the flyweight division.

As of 27 May 2016 she was the reigning Olympic,

World and European Games champion at flyweight, and won the entire set of amateur championships available to her – Olympic, Commonwealth and European Games' titles, and the World, European and European Union championships.

She is openly a lesbian, and was named the most influential LGBT person in Britain by The Independent in 2012 and has been included in the annual Powerlist recognition as one of the most influential people of African/African-Caribbean descent in the UK.

She retired with an undefeated record and held the WBO female flyweight title in 2019, and she still remains an active part of the boxing community, helping train and inspire youngsters to get active across the UK.



What was life like for women in the 2020s

Although life for women has progressively improved throughout the decades it is still not perfect and many of the advancements seen prove we have still not reached total equality. In November, Kamala Harris became the first woman vice-president-elect of the United States, shattering barriers that have kept men entrenched at the highest levels of American politics for many years. The Scottish parliament voted unanimously in favour of the Period Products bill in November, making Scotland the first country to allow free and universal access to menstrual products –including tampons and pads – in public buildings including schools and universities. It marks a significant victory for the global movement against period poverty which impacts women and girls in many ways. With 12.8 percent of women and girls worldwide living in poverty, the cost of menstrual products and added taxes leave many without ways to safely manage their periods. In October 2020, co-hosted by the President of the General Assembly and UN Women, leaders came together to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for action, the most comprehensive roadmap for advancing gender equality. Over 100 countries committed to concrete actions that would accelerate the realisation of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls everywhere. These are just a few of the progresses that have been made and show that rights for females are still changing all throughout the world for the UK to the United States to Afghanistan.



Now - Linda Cruse

Whilst working long hours as a single mum Linda Cruse had a life-changing experience, as she was driving along the motorway late at night she suddenly and temporarily (for a few hours) went blind. This near-death experience, she says, made her reconsider her life's purpose and strive to make an impact. She chose to drop her drop in favour of becoming a volunteer worker. On the back of her nursing experience she was sent to southern China as a volunteer teacher. Before long she gained a reputation for creating strong links between big businesses and small local charities. Over the years she has worked with leading entrepreneurs including Sir Richard Branson with the Virgin group in South Africa and Morocco. After China she moved on to projects in Nepal and Tibet where she was granted a private audience with the Dalai Lama. Linda then went to India where she pioneered a project to create employment opportunities for Tibetan refugees. It was a huge success and Prince Charles came to see the project. In 2004 when the Asian tsunami struck. Linda travelled to a refugee camp in the beleaguered Thai region of Khao Lak but the first few hours were so horrifying she wondered if she could bear to stay.

Linda stayed for two years, helping launch new businesses and organising for Thai fishermen to learn how to build new boats. Her next project was in Pakistan which had been devastated by an earthquake in 2005. "Thousands were dying of thirst and starvation but there was hardly any aid. I knew I had to go," says Linda. She now wants more people to get involved in international projects and has launched her own organisation, Be The Change, to bring business leaders and charities together. Linda has lived in many tough circumstances and strife but always felt emotionally fulfilled teaching skills and bringing aid, and above all, love, to war-torn refugees, the poverty-stricken and the victims of disaster.

Described as a pioneer and entrepreneur, Linda is a leadership expert, inspirational speaker and successful author. Working in extreme conditions for over two decades, Linda has dedicated her life to finding creative and sustainable economic solutions that have the power to lift communities from the grip of poverty and from the depths of disaster.