

SUBJECT NAME : WOMEN STUDIES

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1. WOMEN ISSUES IN THE INDEPENDENT INDIA

Problems such as child marriage, practice of 'sati', prohibition on widow remarriage, exploitation of widows, devadasi system, Purdah system, etc. have almost disappeared. Development in the field of science and technology, universalisation of education, socio-political movements, modernization and similar developments have changed the approach of people towards women to a certain extent.

India is a country where women are given the status of a goddess. However, the problems they have to face just show the opposite of this concept. One hand, they worship them as goddesses and on the other, they abuse them endlessly and consider them inferior. Indian women always

had some problem or the other to face in society. People evolved and so did the problems, they did not go away but changed from one to another. We need to realize these problems and act on them fast to help our country thrive.

PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN IN INDIA :-

When in the early days, there were severe issues like the Sati system, no widow remarriage, devadasi system and more. While most of them are not prevalent now, there are new issues that women face. They may be not the same but they are still as severe as the early ones. They hinder the growth of a country and make the women feel inferior.

Firstly, violence against women is a very grave issue faced by women in India. It is happening almost every day in various forms. People turn a blind eye to it instead of doing something. Domestic violence happens more often than you think. Further, there is also dowry-related harassment, marital rape, genital mutilation and more.

Next up, also have the issues of gender discrimination. Women are not considered equal to men. They face discrimination in almost every place, whether at the workplace or at home. Even the

little girls become a victim of this discrimination.

The patriarchy dictates a women's life unjustly.

Moreover, there is also a lack of female education and the gender ^{pay} gap. Women in rural areas are still denied education for being a female.

Similarly, women do not get equal pay as men for doing the same work. On top of that, they also face workplace harassment and exploitation.

WAYS TO TACKLE THESE ISSUES 1-

We must all come together as one to fight these issues faced by women in India. Every citizen and government must try to make it a safe place for women to be in. They must make more stringent laws against people who commit crimes against women. They must also be implemented properly to ensure everyone takes them seriously.

Furthermore, opportunities must be provided equally for men and women. In every field, we must encourage women to give their best. It does not matter whether it is the medical field or sports field, opportunities must be equal.

Moreover, education must be stressed upon gravely. It must be made a compulsion to educate every girl and woman for a better future. We must join hands to protect and safeguard our women in

in India. It will help us thrive as a country and make the world a better place.

Therefore, each one of us must be ready to treat women as equal counterparts. We must help them at every stage and more than that empower them to make their own decisions. After that, these issues can be eliminated so women need not face discrimination in the name of gender.

2. WOMEN RIGHTS AND LEGAL PROTECTION

Women rights are protected under several number of legislations in India. The importance of the protection has been extended by new and changed laws on protection of women's rights.

In Indian society, women occupies a vital position and venerable place. The Vedas glorified women as the mother, the creator, and one who gives life and worshipped her as Devi or Goddess. Women in India, today, are becoming the most vulnerable section as far as their safety and security is concerned. Violence against women can fit into several broad categories. Some of them are rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment, female infanticide, etc.

Our country must have the largest number of laws, ostensibly for the benefit of women. The Constitution, and the different Acts passed by the

Union Governments and the states give special protection to women, aware of their weak position. In spite of all these pieces of legislation loaded in favour of women, their condition is improving only at a snail's pace.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS 1-

The Constitution of India guarantees the right to equality to women. It embodies the general principles of equality before law and prohibits unreasonable discrimination between persons. Article 14 embodies the idea of equality expressed in preamble.

Thus, in *Air India V. Nargesh Meerza*, the Supreme Court struck down the offending regulations of Air India and Indian Airlines that provided that an airhostess would retire on attaining the age of 35 years, or on the first pregnancy, whichever was earlier.

While article 15(1) prohibits the state from discriminating on the basis of religion, race, caste, gender, or place of birth, Article 15(3) allows the state to make special provisions for women and children. Article 15 merely elaborates that same concept and acknowledges that women need special treatment for their upliftment.

Article 16 provides equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State. In

C.B. Muthamma v. Union of India the Supreme Court held that a provision of the service rules requiring a female employee to obtain permission of the government in writing before getting married and denying her the right to be promoted on the ground of her being married was discriminatory.

Article 39(a) - Urges the state to provide equal right to adequate means of livelihood to men and women.

Article 39(d) - Equal pay for equal work for both men and women. In the case of "Randhir Singh v. Union of India AIR 1982, SC held that equal pay for equal work is a constitutional goal and is capable of being enforced.

In pursuance of Article 42 of the Constitution, the Maternity Benefit Act has been passed in 1961.

Article 44 enjoins the state to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India.

Article 51A(e) says that it is the duty of the citizens to renounce practices that are derogatory to the dignity of women.

Besides these constitutional provisions, there are several laws meant for the protection and benefit of women.

LEGAL PROVISIONS :-

* DOWRY PROHIBITION ACT, 1961 - The purpose of this Act is to prevent the giving or taking of dowry. It not only penalizes this act but also makes the act of demanding dowry an offence.

* THE MEDICAL TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY ACT, 1971 - This Act provides for the termination of certain pregnancies by registered medical practitioners and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

* THE HINDU SUCCESSION ACT, 1956 WITH AMENDMENT IN 2005 - This Act provided for equal inheritance rights to women for the first time. It abolished the concept of limited estate of women.

* THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT, 2005 - Domestic Violence Act meant to provide for more effective protection of the rights of women guaranteed under the Constitution who are victims of violence of any kind occurring within the family and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

* THE COMMISSION OF SATI (PREVENTION) ACT, 1987 - Its object is to prevent the practice of Sati and the glorification of such an act. An attempt to commit Sati is also punishable under certain circumstances.

Indian women have had an extremely difficult time developing under the oppression of a male-dominated society, class and religion. But now it's the time to break silence. Women are entitled to respect. If every parent taught his or her son to respect women and treat them with dignity, a day would have come when they would not fear for the safety of their daughter. That would be a real education. Of course, there is a need to change our mindset and the patriarchal views that have engulfed Indian mindsets since ages.

3. WOMEN IN POLITICS - PARLIAMENT AND STATE LEGISLATURES

India elected the world's first woman Prime Minister but women's representation in the Parliament and State Legislatures remain unsatisfactory till date. Women make up 49% of the population of India but their representation in the 2014 Lok Sabha has been only 12.1%. In 1952, women formed just 5% of Lok Sabha and just 22 members were elected. According to the 2017 data released by the Ministry of statistics and programme implementation, the state assemblies of Rajasthan, Haryana and Bihar have the highest percentage of women representatives with 14% each. The passage of 73rd

and 74th constitutional amendment act provided one-third reservation in panchayats and urban local bodies but women have still not been provided reservation in the Parliament and State Legislatures.

WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN STATE LEGISLATURES:

The representation of women in the state legislatures has been even lower than the parliament. The states like Mizoram, Nagaland and Puducherry do not have any elected women representative in their assemblies. The overall average of women representatives in the state legislative councils was 5% as per the 2017 data of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. The highest representation of women is in Rajasthan, Bihar, and Haryana (14%). The major reason for low representation of women in the state legislatures is due to several reasons such as the patriarchal structure of the Indian politics, lack of awareness about electoral politics among women, the unwillingness of political parties to give tickets to women candidates, lack of family support for women to enter politics, etc.

NEED FOR WOMEN RESERVATION IN THE PARLIAMENT AND

STATE LEGISLATURES:

Providing reservation to women in the Parliament

and state legislatures will make our democracy more representative and mature. Democracy without representation has no meaning, so women reservation in the parliament and state assemblies becomes important. The essence of reservation for women is based on historical inequality and under-representation. Women have historically suffered discrimination and impediments in politics.

Passage of the women reservation bill would bring gender equality in the Parliament and state legislatures which would eventually empower the women as a whole. Participation of women in politics will help them to fight from discrimination, abuse and inequality they suffer from. It has been argued that in the absence of sufficient women members in the Parliament and state assemblies, only men take decisions for women while making and amending the laws. This is unfair as the voices and viewpoints of half of the population remain unheard. The argument that women reservation is against the concept of the merit-based system is flawed. The reality of Indian elections is that political parties do not give tickets to the candidates on the basis of merit, but on the basis of the capability to win the elections. Giving reservation to women would not negatively impact the merit of parliamentarians and legislatures.

4. WOMEN AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT-SHG.

The origin of self-help group can be traced its from Grameen bank of Bangladesh, which was founded by Mohamed Yunus. SHGs were started and formed in 1975. In India NABARD initiated in 1986-1987. The absence of institutional credits available in the rural area has led to the establishment of SHGs. The concept of self help groups has been evolved to organise the rural poor to meet their productive and consumption needs out of their saving. India has adopted the Bangladesh model in a modified form. To alleviate the poverty and empower the women. The micro-finance has emerged as a powerful instrument in the new economy. With availability of microfinance, has emerged SHGs and credit management groups have also started in India. And thus the movement of SHG has spread out in India. In 1991-92 NABARD starting promoting self help groups in a large scale. And it was the real take off point for the SHGs movement. In 1993, the Reserve Bank of India also allowed SHGs to open saving accounts in banks facility of availing bank services was a major boost to the movement.

In 1999, Government of India, introduced Swarn Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojna (SGSY) to promote self-employment in rural areas through formation and skilling of SHGs. The programme evolved as a national movement in 2011 and became National Rural

Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) - world's largest poverty alleviation programme. Today, State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs) are operational in 29 states and 5 Union Territories (except Delhi and Chandigarh). NRLM facilitated universal access to the affordable cost-effective reliable financial services to the poor like financial literacy, bank account, savings, credit, insurance, remittance, pension and counselling on financial services.

OBJECTIVES OF SHGs :-

The SHGs significantly contribute to the empowerment of poor.

*To sensitise people of target area for the need of SHG and its relevance in their empowerment process.

*To create group feeling among members.

*To enhance the confidence and capabilities of members.

*To develop collective decision making among members.

*To encourage habit of saving among members and facilitate the accumulation of their own capital resource base.

*To motivate members taking up social responsibilities particularly related to development.

BENEFITS OF SHGs :

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT :

Gender equality is considered the milestone of

development because when women and men are equal in the society, the economy and health of the family improves reducing poverty.

SOCIAL

India is a hierarchical society where people are ranked according to families, clans, castes, and religions. Self Help Groups are necessary to overcome exploitation, create confidence for the economic self-reliance of rural people, particularly among women who are mostly invisible in the social structure.

FINANCIAL

All types of financial services such as micro loans, savings and insurance provided to low-income households and enterprises (less favoured sectors of society). In this context, SHGs can be considered as a model or vehicle to deliver those products and services to the poor.

PRESSURE GROUPS

SHGs work as pressure entities to address social issues such as education, health, lack of access to natural resources, etc.,

AWARENESS OF GROUP

The group will create a awareness among the members and empowerment of members take place. The members will have to know the purpose of group formation, activities and operations, savings, credits, etc.,

In this era of liberalization, privatisation and globalization, women are more conscious for their liberty, rights and freedom, security, social status, etc. but till date they are deprived from same; hence, they should be provided with their deserving rights and liberties with dignity. SHGs play a very important role in the economic and social advancement of women from usual strata of society. Further, government programmes can be implemented through various SHGs. This will only improve the transparency and efficiency but also bring our society closer to 'self-governance' as envisioned by Mahatma Gandhi.

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