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## **Women and Society**

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### **ABSTRACT**

A woman is the replica of the goddess but are they treated like one? The answer to this question can be traced back to history. Our society is fighting hard for many years against this evil but even today the desired results have not been achieved. Women's rights are an inseparable and indivisible part of human rights, so the equal and active participation of women in political and economic spheres at the national, regional, and international levels and the elimination of all forms of sexual discrimination are now the ultimate goals of all governments. But full access and enjoyment of rights and freedoms must be linked to their potential and there is no shortcut to changing social evil and a system that is deeply entrenched in Indian society. To achieve social justice, ignorance and inequality must be eradicated and people's attitudes must be transformed through education and awareness.

This article focuses on the status of women in our society. It deals with the traditional perceptions, the violence against women, and the inequality they face. The article also highlights the forms of violence they face and the work of the legislature in concerning the issue. It provides an insight to curb the issue and the need for collective thinking.

### **INTRODUCTION**

When we meet a person, we are accustomed to making a distinction of 'male or female' unhesitatingly- through this meaning, Sigmund Freud symbolized our society.

The United National Population Fund, in September 2000, revealed that across the world, one out of three women had been physically abused or manhandled in some or the other way, regularly by somebody she knew, her husband or any male acquaintance. Accordingly, the legislatures publically censured viciousness against women and resolved to show political will and give monetary assets to its annihilation, however their presentation, practically, crashed terrifically to address women's issues.

The growing imbalances of urbanization, class inequalities and social transformation have critically been symbolized by women. All these have influenced antagonistically the different aspects of women's status in the contemporary Indian culture. Repetition of low representation of women's work reflects a combination of factors. Women's participation in the workplace and their status as employees are affected by a variety of factors. The few important are women's self-esteem, employers' attitudes towards female employees, traditional management positions in rural and urban areas, and traditional role expectations.

### SEX AND GENDER

Often, sociologists use the term sex to refer to the differences in body composition and physiology that describe the bodies of men and women. Gender is linked to community-based ideas of masculinity and femininity; it is not a direct product of human sexuality. The differences between sex and gender are important because the main differences between men and women do not come from biology only. The interpretation of gender differences and inequality has taken a controversial position in this question of gender and sex.

### **PERSPECTIVE ON GENDER INEQUALITY**

Gender is a concept developed in society, which reflects the roles and personalities that are different for men as well women. However, gender differences are rarely neutral - in almost all societies, gender is an important means of social classification. Gender is a very important factor in creating a variety of opportunities and choices in the life of individuals or groups are, and it greatly influences the roles they play in social institutions from different places. Although the roles of men and women vary from culture to culture, in every society, women are dominated by men. The roles of men are more respected and rewarding than the roles of women. Everywhere women carry the responsibility of caring for children and housework, while the men traditionally carried the burden to meet family needs. The existing gender inequality has led to men as well women taking on unequal positions in terms of power, prestige, and wealth. Despite what women have achieved internationally, gender differences continue to serve as the basis for this social inequality.

The status of women in the family is similar to their position at the workplace. Women, however, do not earn money for the household chores she does, although these jobs are important for family survival. Apart from the importance of that work, it is not considered appropriate in terms of wage compensation. The status of men helps to build his most important position in the family because women do not have access to resources outside the home. Gender inequality has historically been linked to the lower status of women in the family through rulemaking and resource management. This relationship continues within the labor market where historically men have achieved their positions by making laws (controlling managers and employees) and by receiving unequal rewards.

In patriarchal and patrilineal societies, where women are discriminated against solely on the based on sexual orientation, even women who do economic work gain power from men in their lives and not from their productive activities. Men exhibit their superiority in important decisions. Women who work economically productive tend to have less power than women who do not participate in productive work. This happens in families where men are doing marginal jobs and do not have a strong economic base. They lack confidence in their family rule and feel that they are dependent on their wives income.

There are observations taken into account when we see the historical aspect of women's status in society-

- Generally, it has been noticed that women enter into labor jobs at lower wages than men. They engage easily at low pays while men get higher wages for their work.
- Women enter the labor market later than men and leave early due to children and family responsibilities. Many families do not allow women to work after their marriage. They get stuck in household chores only.
- Women earn less over time than men. Overtime pay represents the difference between a good life and the marginalized life of skilled and unskilled workers. Industry and manufacturing provide overtime pay. These sectors employ mainly men. The service sector does not pay for overtime as much as production. These sectors rely heavily on female employees.

### **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

There are many incidental cases in history where women have been abused and tortured physically and mentally. Rape, murder, assault, and abduction are a part of our society from immemorial times. Violence against women in India starts with their birth. Boys are more preferable to girls. In many cases, the birth of a girl does not please even her parents. On the contrary, the birth of a son is an occasion of celebration. If a woman accidentally gave birth to two or three daughters, she would be humiliated. Especially her in-laws abuse her. Many women have committed suicide after being abused by their mothers-in-law and husband for failing to give birth to a son for the family. There are countless instances when parents leave female children at the orphanage or in a hospital or park and say goodbye to a child forever. There are various social, economic, legal, and psychological forms of violence against women. We live in a society where men own most of the institutions.

- Sexual Harassment at Workplace

Sexual Harassment is a crucial societal issue to look upon as it hinders the dependence and opportunities of women. The causes of sexual harassment in the workplace are quite complex, and they are rooted in social, political, emotional, and psychological aspects. Work relationships can be intimate, personal, and strong. This closeness can hold boundaries that are often overlooked. Employees rely on each other for support and rely on their supervisors for approval of the opportunities and success of their jobs. Managers and supervisors can adjust their power of authority to employees. Sexual abuse can be caused by several traumatic events such as family death, divorce, financial issues, etc. There are many ways to try to help in the fight against sexual harassment, but the most effective way to end sexual harassment in the workplace is to prevent it.

**SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE (PREVENTION, PROHIBITION, AND REDRESSAL) ACT, 2013**

The Sexual Harassment of Women in the Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, and its by-laws provide for correction of abused woman including women employed by the organization, and women associated with the organization in any capacity, such as visitor or trainee; or other women who have been subjected to sexual harassment in connection with the work or place of work of that organization. A complaint may be lodged with an employee of the organization, or even an outside person you meet during or in connection with an employee, such as a consultant, service provider, or vendor, in the workplace or organization.

The Prevention of Sexual Harassment of Women in the Workplace, 2013 act provides the law for a 90-day limitation of grievances; this may be extended by an additional 90 days by the Internal Committee if the delay is properly specified (Section 9 (1)). Any abused woman can make, in writing, a complaint of sexual harassment on duty at the ICC, within three months from the date of the incident and in the event of a series of incidents, within three months from the date of the last incident. In criminal law, there is a time limit ranging from one year to three years depending on the type of case. While the time limit under Section 354A of the IPC for sexual harassment is three years, it should be three years from the date on which the woman is emotionally ready to complain. There is no time limit for filing a complaint with the police. The investigation must be completed within 90 days (Section 11 (4)).

**Vishaka & Ors vs State of Rajasthan & Ors<sup>1</sup> (1997)**

This is the first landmark case that strengthened the women empowerment by giving authoritative decision. The Supreme Court defined sexual harassment as any physical sexual touch, contact and pornographic content comes under its ambit. It also defined workplace as not only an infrastructure in which the employees works but all the places they visit during the course of their employment. The Vishaka Guidelines incorporated the elements and definition sexual harassment in Section 354-A of the Indian Penal Code.

The Supreme Court held that the person in-charge of the particular institution, organization and center will be responsible for taking measures to prevent sexual harassment and if any outsider commits harassment the person in-charge shall take strict action and inform the authority for the same. The judgement was given keeping in mind the Convention on Elimination of discrimination against women. It also enacted it for preventing gender discrimination at workplace and providing safe environment for women at workplace.

The judgement focused on giving extended rights to women for their right to life and right to dignified life. It is a complete violation of the Article 14, 15, 19 (1) (g) and 21 of the

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<sup>1</sup> (1997) 6 SSC 241; AIR 1997SC.3011

constitution. Before this judgement no formal guidelines were there to prevent sexual harassment at workplace hence this judgement has given new horizon for women empowerment at workplace.

- Dowry

Dowry usually refers to gifts given to the groom or his parents in cash or kind. Marriage often involves huge expenses incurred in traveling and entertaining the groom's family. The custom of giving gifts continues throughout the life of the couple, during festivals and celebrations. Indirectly it is thought to be a way to give the girl her part of the family property. Hindu laws relating to property and ownership, in their current form, do not give women their fair share of family income and property. The Hindu Succession Act gives women the right to share the family property. But the culture dies hard, and in many cases, family property is passed on to sons. Usually, the daughters do not object to this, which is why they unintentionally intensify the argument that the dowry alone assures them that they share their father's property well, which will help them to deal with any problem.

### **DOWRY PROHIBITION ACT, 1961**

The first attempt by the Indian government to acknowledge dowry as a social offense and to curb its practice was the 1961 Dowry Prohibition Act. It has played an important role in this process of change. The 1961 law defines dowry and makes this practice to give and take dowry, a punishable offense. Any agreement regarding dowry does not apply. If given at all, it will be women's property. With increasing awareness of dowry deaths, the women's movement carried out an analysis of the 1961 Dowry Act and criticized it as a hypothesis and a lack of clarity.

- Domestic Violence

Violence against women includes physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse against women. India is one of the most vulnerable countries in terms of the number and rates of crimes committed against their women.

The Domestic Violence Act empowers women to overcome patriarchal oppression and to live with dignity. The DVA represents a milestone in achieving gender equality for Indian women in two important ways.

- ✓ First, it confirms the myth that an Indian family is a safe place for all its members. This is evident by a variety of abuses against women. Evidence-based on the existence of these acts of domestic violence has been available for years and has finally been found in the law.
- ✓ Secondly, the law undermines and cuts the link of domestic violence from dowry-related harassment and deaths. Until now, victims of domestic violence were often forced to associate violence with dowry demands to avail legal remedies under the Indian Penal

Code. The only thing they obtain was divorce based on cruelty. The Domestic Violence Act provides the assistance of the Civil Code for domestic violence-related reliefs, which is known to occur for a variety of reasons, in every class, religion, in rural and urban areas.

#### FEATURES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT

- Laws have some flexible features. For the first time, marital rape was officially recognized as a form of domestic violence. Although the criminal law has not yet been amended to give a woman the opportunity to file a rape case against her husband or her domestic partner, she has now being given access to new social mechanisms, including obtaining a protection order or injunction against the abuser.
- The Domestic Violence Act views child sexual abuse as a crime and recognizes child's rights. They should be free from violence at home.
- Domestic Violence is not limited to women but includes mothers, daughters, sisters, widows, divorced women living in the home as well as those in informal relationships with the accused, including intimate relationships.
- The Act will also apply to a man who abuses or beats a prostitute with whom he has a long-term relationship.
- Neighbors, social workers, or relatives on behalf of the victim may lodge complaints about domestic violence and the Magistrate is empowered to do so, including issuing protection or restraining orders and giving financial assistance.
- DVA incorporates acts that violate a woman's dignity or any other unacceptable behavior of sexual violence, considered degrading and disgraceful. Prevention of sexual harassment requires compliance with education on sexual rights.

#### CONCLUSION

Violence against women is a very crucial issue. The dignity of women is considered of no value to some people and treat the like a puppet their whole life. Perhaps the government can run campaigns on these issues or with the assistance of NGOs, the issue can be highlighted. To be effective, the government must provide funding to encourage the registration of service providers who will need the protection of the Act. The government will also have to launch a comprehensive public awareness campaign.

There is a need to implement training programs to bring the police, the media, and the judiciary to the level of supremacy, implementation, and operation of the Act. It is now widely acknowledged that although many progressive laws have tried to give women equal status, the biggest obstacle to equality is not the non-compliance of the law, but the traditional unhealthy mindset that refuses to accept woman equality. It is this same mentality that survives within families and this creates the kind of ongoing verbal abuse that can have such devastating consequences.

Not only the legislature but we the people of the society can also make a difference by coordinating with all the branches to stop violence against women. A strategical mind, enthusiasm to aware and collective execution would help us to curb such evils in society. Together we can bring forth the rights and equality they deserve.