

## TITLE OF CONTENT: WOMEN IN INDIA

B.A. (II<sup>ND</sup> SEMESTER)- PAPER II- INDIAN SOCIETY ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

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Nowhere in the history of humanity men and women were treated alike and assigned statuses alike. Women have not been able to lead a life exactly on par with men in spite of their urge of equality. But women in ancient India, particularly during the Vedic period enjoyed a position which was on the whole much more satisfactory than in the later periods. Women underwent almost a kind of servitude during the Medieval period and their position went on improving during the British period and after independence. Today Indian women are almost assigned an equal status with men. All their political, economic, educational and other disabilities have been removed legally.

### Status of women in Independent India

The status of women has radically changed since independence Both the structural and cultural changes provided equality of opportunities to women, employment and political participation. With the help of these changes exploitation of women to a great extent was reduced. More freedom and better orientation were provided to the women's organizations to pursue their interests. Importance of researches, national policies and programmes focused on women came to be increasingly realized. Several commissions were appointed by the Central and State Governments to study the causes of low status of women and to protect their rights in various fields. The celebration of "*International Women's Year*" in 1975 and the activities of UNESCO also created awareness of the problems of women.

Improvement in the status of women post independence can be analyzed in light of the major changes which have taken place in areas such as legislations, education, economic and employment sector, increase in political participation and creation of awareness in the rights of women.

#### **1. Constitutional Provisions and Legislations for women**

- a. Constitutional provision for equality to women: The Constitution of India provides for equal rights for both men and women. Both men and women are

equally entitled to individual freedom, fundamental rights including the right to participate in social, cultural, religious, educational, economic and political activities. It provides for equality of opportunity even when it comes to providing voting rights to both men and women.

- b. Social legislations safeguarding rights of women: The Parliament in an endeavor to safeguard the interest of women has enacted a number of legislations to ensure the rights enshrined in the Constitution are provided to women. Some of which are, the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, Dowry Prohibition Act 1961, Suppression of Immoral Trafficking of Women and Girls Act 1956 etc.

## **2. Education and Women**

After independence women in India took to education. This was also motivated by various reforms brought about to further education and literacy amongst women in India.

- Separate schools and colleges being built for women
- Universities and educational institutions established by women for higher education

## **3. Women and Employment**

## **4. Creation of awareness about their rights**

### **Problems faced by women in Modern India**

1. Increasing violence against women
  - a. Violence is almost universal
  - b. Women as victims of violence
  - c. Increasing crimes against women

### **Violence against women within and Outside family**

- Violence against women within the family or domestic violence
- Violence against women outside the family or social violence

## **2. Gender Discrimination**

Different aspects of the practice of gender discrimination

- a) Socialization
- b) Distribution of work and power
- c) Impact on women's health
- d) Decline in female population
- e) Opportunities in occupation and public life

3. Problems of Female Education
4. Employment and Unemployment of women- problems faced thereby
5. Harassment of women at workplace
6. Media and exploitation of women
7. Divorce and desertion
8. Issues relating to dowry
9. Limited political participation of women

### Empowerment of Women

The term empowerment could be understood as the process of providing equal rights, opportunities, responsibilities and power positions to women so they are capable of being at par with men in the society. It also help makes women capable of taking control of their lives and making them financially and socially independent.

#### ➤ **Strategies towards development and women empowerment**

- a) Encouraging greater political participation of women
- b) Schemes to help women generate income and avail prevalent sources of income
- c) Increasing literacy levels amongst women

#### ➤ **73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment and contribution to women empowerment**

The main aim of the 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional amendment of 1993 was to provide political status to women at the village level. However this too suffered from drawback such as:-

- a. Illiteracy among women
- b. Non-availability of women
- c. Corruption in bureaucracy
- d. Bias towards the social elites

➤ **Need for empowering women**

- Enabling women to enjoy the benefits of development
- Help women battle problems relating to their health
- Make women economically independent so as to be at par with men
- Prevent violence and atrocities against women

➤ **Factors facilitating empowerment of women**

- Acknowledging women's rights
- Freedom of choice
- Access to education and sources of employment
- Increased political participation