



POSITION OF WOMEN IN INDIA: AN aOVERVIEW

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Abstract

Women represent almost half of the total population of our country and their participation in the development programmes is considered of imperative significance. No schemes whether in the field of economic development or social development can be successful unless women play their constructive role in such programmes. In spite of the social imbalances existing in the society, there has been considerable improvement in their social status and today women occupy many high positions and their instinctive zest for life and cheerful disposition illumines many homes. Women's role in directing and shaping the destiny of the society is crucial

Key words:- Constructive, schemes, destiny, illumines, homes.

Introduction

The status of women in India has been a chequered one as it has seen many ups and downs. In the Vedic age, they were worshipped as goddesses. In the Muslim age, their status suffered a sharp decline and in the British regime they were looked down upon as "slaves of slaves." Since independence the tide seems to have gone in their favour. There is no denying the fact that women in India have made some progress, may be, because of the social legislation. the progress made in the fields of education, health or economics or as a result of technological developments, or because of a process of evolution. Though in very small numbers, today we have women in almost all spheres of life. They are doctors, engineers, pilots, journalists, teachers, administrators, judges including a woman judge in the Supreme Court, State governors, ambassadors, members of Parliament and ministers. We have had a woman Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi and President of India smt Pratibha sing Patil. and so on

SOCIAL WELFARE ADMINISTRATION IN INDIA.

The Constitution (73rd & 74th) Amendment Acts. 1992 provide 33 per cent reservation for women in Panchayati Raj institutions and urban local bodies enabling women to take the positions of Sarpanchs, Mayors councillors, etc. of their respective bodies. Ms. Kiran Bedi has become legendary as a model IPS woman officer; Late Ms. Kalpana Chawala is an illustrious example as a woman astronaut.

But the situation on the economic front is dismal. The women work in the house which includes, collection of firewood, bringing of water from long distances and helping in the family' business or in the fields is not recognized because they are not paid for it. The census report does not take

note of it. It is estimated that the average hours of unpaid work done by women outside their home ranges from 6.1 to 7.5 hours per day with some women working for 10 hours and more. This apart, 89.5 per cent of the women workers are engaged in the unorganized sector. Of these, 82 per cent are in agriculture and allied occupations. In the organized sector women form 13.3 per cent of the total number of employees. In the public sector they account for 11 per cent of the employment force and in the private sector the percentage is 17.8.

So far as senior management jobs are concerned, women hold 5.8 per cent posts as against men in similar positions. There are only 9 per cent women officers in the Indian Police Service. In the Indian Administrative Service. There are 7.5 per cent women. Though concern is being expressed for her emancipation in every field, economic independence is of paramount importance. Efforts are on to ensure that women are economically not dependent on anyone. But these efforts have hardly been of any help. The woman is now burdened with two kinds of jobs—her work within the house and the job outside. She does not find any free time to enjoy the fruits of her economic independence. Not only that in many cases she is the custodian of her salary till she arrives home. Her salary later becomes a part of the total income of her family. The economic independence is not the final solution. An equal emphasis has to be laid on the total development of the woman. the awareness about her rights and responsibilities, the recognition of her role and the work that she does at home. If necessary the social system must change so that the woman does not have to ask for concessions.

The condition in the political arena is no better. Each political party stands for women's participation in political activities in a big way. But do we see the reflection of their wishes in Parliament? The percentage of women members of Parliament has Seventy Eight which is 14% in Lok sabha, and 29 members in Rajya sabha. A dismal picture of the status of women as attempted above is further reflected in their position in the society. As stated earlier, the sex ratio Sex ratio is used to describe the number of females per 1000 of males. Sex ratio is . In the Population Census of 2011 it was revealed that the population ratio in India 2011 is 940 females per 1000 of males. The Sex Ratio 2011 shows an upward trend from the

census 2001 data. Census 2001 revealed that there were 933 females to that of 1000 males. Since decades India has seen a decrease in the sex ratio 2011, but since the last two of the decades there has been in slight increase in the sex ratio. Since the last five decades the sex ratio has been moving around 930 of females to that of 1000 of males. 52 per cent of women are consulted for decisions concerning their own

Health. The percentage of deliveries attended by health professionals in 1998-99 was 43 per cent, the lowest proportion is 22 per cent in Uttar Pradesh. Women's wage rate is on an average only 75 per cent of that of men and constitutes only one fourth of the family income.

It is estimated that in India there are 92 million working women. Studies conclude that not only the women form the most impoverished lot but also that the women represent the fastest increasing group of impoverished. Nowhere, apart from certain African countries, has poverty adopted the female face in such a fantastic manners in the sub-continent.

Poverty reflects not only in economic terms but also translates into deprivations of several kinds. In poorer households right from food, work, education, clothing to marriage, women receive the worst of the lot. Nutritious food is reserved for the male members. If there is an increase in the household expenditure, it is the women and the young girls' diets that are first slashed. Alongside unequal food distribution comes unequal provisions for health care facilities. Studies show that females are less likely to receive medical care than males, less likely to be admitted to hospitals and in some instances less likely to survive than boys. A poor nutritious state of females means that their illness is of longer duration.

Girls are made to leave schools at the smallest of excuses, mainly to act as household assistants or domestic servants while boys are allowed to study relatively more.

For every woman who steps out of the house to work as a domestic help or as a construction worker or as farmer, there is her daughter who stays back home babysitting, cooking and housekeeping. Thus, lesser fed, lesser loved and lesser educated she is often gotten rid of in the form of marriage earliest of the earliest, sometimes barely in her teens. This leads to premature motherhood and a staggering mortality rate of 410 per one hundred thousand deliveries, giving birth on an average 3.3 times in her life. However, many a time she is not allowed the dignity of marriage but rather used like a slave.

. In most Indian households, females are denied as much independence in professional education and other essential forms of instruction like rationality to make economic investments and a nice life. She is groomed to subordinate herself to the collective will of the family to ensure that she makes a good life later. A young and easily domineering girl is still the dream Bohu (daughter-in-law) of the Indian household. Later on, she is denied inheritance on equal footing. There is obviously lack of decision making power even of the

elementary type. This includes stepping out of the house to visit friends or to shop. When it comes to higher decisions like those related to finance, property, planning families, etc. independence is almost unheard of.

Hard pressed to accommodate the role both of breadwinners and domestic caretakers, women are often forced to make compromises on professional fronts. They accept jobs that pay less, offer minimum economic and social security, where labour laws are difficult to implement and where there are minimum chances of economic growth.

In- rural areas 87 per cent women are employed in agriculture as labourers and cultivators. In urban areas about 80-90 per cent of the women workers are employed in household industries, small trade and services and building and construction. A woman still bears the cost of her traditional domestic chores while the rising cost of living has put on her additional burden of pouring money into the family kitty.

PROBLEMS OF WOMEN As explained above, the plight of women in general is distressing and their conditions in society are deplorable, notwithstanding the fact that there have been some improvements in the lives of negligible section of women. This improvement has been because of the measures taken for the amelioration of their lot by the governments, voluntary organization and social groups. But there still remains a lot to be done to ensure a meaningful life for the womenfolk of our country.

An account of the status of women attempted above highlights the problems of women, which may be enumerated briefly as follows

- (i) **Gender Bias**-Women in India suffer from gender bias of extreme nature. They are discriminated on the basis of their sex. Boys are preferred over girls as is evident from the female foeticide and infanticide, preference to boys in matters of food, nourishment, education and other necessities of life.
- (ii) **Absence of Freedom**-Women do not enjoy as much freedom and liberty as men do. It is rightly observed that women have always to depend on their parents in their childhood and adolescence, on their husbands and parents-in-laws after marriage and on their children in old age. Lack of freedom does not let their instinctive qualities of assertion, leadership and enterprise to develop and blossom.
- (iii) **Crime against women**-Women are victims of crimes of numerous types at the hands .of men. They are abused and exploited, physically and mentally tortured, beaten and even burnt for dowry, divorced on flimsy grounds and compelled to undergo all kinds of hardships of performing the dual tasks of breadwinners and carrying out domestic chores, if employed. Abduction, rapes, murder especially in disputes about property and of old single women by their domestic servants, and harassment at workplaces has become very common.

- (iv) **Poverty**-As women are the most impoverished, they live in abject poverty, if alone they are not able to feed their children, sold by parents in exchange of money, forced to adopt prostitution and even being the object of human traffic to be exported to foreign countries.
- (v) **Denial of Education**-Women are ignorant and illiterate. Girls are denied education as the parents, particularly in rural areas, believe that they are destined to household activities and are not supposed to be exposed outside the four walls of the house.
- (vi) **Inadequate Facilities for Professional Training**-Even though girls in the towns go to schools they are not provided adequate facilities and avenues for training for higher education, especially in the rural areas.
- (vii) **Absence of Employment Opportunities**-There is a dearth of jobs for even educated women. Unemployment is the most serious problem faced to accept jobs at lower wages and on terms and conditions of the employer. They are denied economic and social security available to the regular employees in public services and organized sectors of labour.
- (viii) **Social Evils**- Child marriage expensive marriages involving expenditures beyond the capacity of some parents, large families, too many children despite the publicity for smaller families, joint family system expecting and forcing the women to be engaged in various household responsibilities, lack of leisure and recreational activities, use of drugs and alcohol among the well-to-do family women, death of bread earners in riots and wars further augment the problems of women.
- (ix) **Diseases and Other Health Hazards**-Women being weak for lack of proper nutrition fall an easy prey to all kinds of diseases, epidemics, stresses and strains and the recent onslaught of the deadly diseases like AIDS and Covid 19. There do not exist proper facilities for their treatment for want of proper infrastructure, availability of medicines and treatment in exclusively designed institutes for women patients and for that matter in general hospitals.
- (x) **Absence of Proper Representation in Social, Economic and Political Institutions**-Women are denied proper representation and empowerment in social, economic and political institutions in the matters of decision-making and implementation of concerned policies and programmes. Though they have been given 33 per cent reservation at the grass root institutions, their struggle for getting the same at State legislatures and the Parliament has not been successful so far. They have not been empowered either in Panchayati Raj or in local government institutions in some states. To solve the problem, they have to continue with their struggle more vigorously.

THE CHANGES IN THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Visible and desirable changes in the status of women are evident in great abundance. Gender bias is being removed through legislation and society pressures. More and more girls are going to schools. They

outnumber boys in colleges and universities in achieving top positions. They are qualifying in the common entrance tests to medical, engineering, management, IIT's and civil services. Women like Kalpana Chawala, a space scientist and Kiran Bedi, the most celebrated I.P.S. officer, and the likes are a source of inspiration and models to be followed by the promising young girls. A large number of girls are proving successful as entrepreneurs and are setting up their independent businesses as self-employed in various fields. Conscious of their political rights they are aspiring for occupying the coveted posts of the Heads of government, Chief Ministers and Cabinet Ministers. All this points out the emergence of a bright status for women. The factors contributing to the changes in status of women in recent years and the measures adopted for these changes are discussed in detail as follows :

The year 1990 was observed as the Year of the Girl Child. Her well-being and her status in the family, the community and the nation may be the focal points of concern. Perhaps there may be an increasing awareness that the girl child is also a human being with her thoughts, emotions, aspirations, will and individuality of her own. In fact, the post-independence period, particularly in the case of women, has been a continuation of the Pre-independence era of social reforms, economic uplift and Political recognition. The struggle for equality, justice, parity between women and men and for their identity continues.

The social reforms, which began in the 19th century, set in motion a number of legal measures with a view to improving the conditions of women. The laws thus enacted, among others, related to infanticide, child marriage, widow remarriage, sati, etc. This even though was a step forward and an enabling factor in the development of women, the law could not achieve the desired results. For in the case of social legislation, it is also imperative to have a change in the outlook, in the perception of women's role and support services. All these have been very slow to come by. Consequently, even after more than a century of social reforms, the change, though discernible is far from being indicative of a parity between men and women.

The overview of the situation generally is distressing. Rape, dowry deaths, misuse of the tests to determine the sex of the child in the womb and the termination of pregnancy in the event of a female foetus give an indication of the horrible behaviour patterns. In recent years, the government has taken a number of steps to right the wrong that is done to the girl child. We have the Report of the Committee on the Status of women, the women's year followed by the women's decade, women's departments, national perspective plan for women, the inclusion of a separate chapter on women's development in the coming Plans and now the national commission. All these measures show the concern for women.

The women have yet to travel a long way before they can be equated with men.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE 'YEAR OF THE GIRL CHILD'

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) at its convention at Islamabad in 1989 had agreed upon observing 1990 as the year of the girl child. During the year, India hosted many conferences

and symposia that deliberated on the age old trials and tribulations of the girl child. The year witnessed some developments in favour of girl child and others in exploitation of women.

To begin with, a great achievement of the year has been in the field of adoption. Statistics compiled by the Voluntary Coordinating Agency (VCA), Bombay under the auspices of the Indian Association for Promotion of Adoption show that more parents are taking to adoption- and they prefer girls. And in the state of Maharashtra, there has been a tenfold leap, especially in Bombay, Pune and Nagpur.

Child marriages and particularly marriage of girls below 18 years of age was another topic well covered by the mass media. A suitable SAARC slogan goes thus : "Too old for toys, too young for babies." Amniocentesis with its technique of selective abortion plunged the year into heated debates while adding to the social weaponry used against women. Along with this sex determination technique that put an end to female foetuses, came the feeling that almost everything is stacked against the female child. "Invest Rs. 500 and save Rs. 50,000 later." This is how a doctor in Amritsar advertised his sex determination clinic. Data collected from six hospitals in Mumbai revealed that out of 8,000 foetuses aborted, 7,999 were female.

Widespread agitation and protests in the state succeeded in bringing about a legislation banning amniocentesis in Maharashtra. A similar campaign has resulted in a central legislation. The year also witnessed increasing incidents of violence against women. Ironically, greater awareness has led to more cases being reported, while the number of convictions has gone down. According to police figures, punishments are awarded only in three out of 100 cases. This delay is mainly due to apathy in filing FIRs and issuing challans.

RISE IN CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN

There has been a constant rise in dowry deaths, bride burning and other forms of torture against women in the country. Rape, assault, molestation, kidnapping and illegal confinement are also rampant, both in rural and urban areas. In Delhi alone, the number of dowry deaths was In 2020, reported dowry death cases in India amounted to nearly seven thousand. This was a gradual decrease from the 2014, in which this number was approximately 8.5 thousand. The dowry system in India incorporates payments in the form of capital, durable goods, real estate among others, made to the bridegroom from the family of the bride as a condition for marriage. In 1987 Delhi led all union territories with 103 registered cases of rape and in more than half of these cases the victims were minors. And there were 161 rape cases and 26 gang-rape cases reported in the year 1989. The number of such cases has since increased manifold. If the crime situation in the nation's capital is so alarming, it is no better elsewhere.

Apart from heinous crimes, there are other offences too which are committed against women in subtler forms and on a wider scale. These are, for instance, abortions on suspicion that the child to be born may be a female, and denying the daughters the same quantity and quality of food as given to the sons.

Cyber Violence against Women

Cyber violence against women may be defined as cyber-stalking, e-mail harassment, and using internet to publish obscene information material to exploit or embarrass some women.

A study recently conducted reveals that digital revolution, information technology, the internet and globalization are proving to be a double edged sword for women all over the world. With a tremendous potential to improve the status of women in every country, advances in information technology during the past 10 years or so, have facilitated a global communications network and a global media that transcends national boundaries with impact on public: policy, private attitudes and, above all, individual and social behaviour.

Unfortunately, apart from providing tremendous benefits, particularly for women, to realize their human rights, the new digital revolution has its seamy side too. The double-edged technological weapons have come in as a handy and extremely powerful tool in the hands of those who want to create trouble for women by causing violence against women in ever new ways, unheard of before. No doubt, the cyber crimes are pretty easy to commit with very little resources, but the damage caused could be huge.

There are many number of cases relating to criminals operating under pseudo identities to enter the internet "chat-rooms" and exploit helpless women, girls and even children.

Studies have shown that about 60 per cent of all websites are sexual in content. Twenty per cent of them solicited their visitors, 13 per cent went voluntarily and the rest were pictorially lured. An estimated 1,00,000 pornographic websites generate revenues in the region of \$ 1billion annually. The increasing popularity of chat rooms and the vulnerability of personal data to criminal access makes women and children the easiest targets for a range of culpable crimes. The bottom-line is that the Information Technology and the internet are like technological tornados bound to sweep every woman and man off the floor and no country in the world can either ignore or afford to go slow on these. Therefore, it should better be prepared in advance to be able to utilize the same to its benefit, or else be prepared to be left on the wrong side of the digital divide.

Reasons for Rise in Crimes Against Women and Suggestions to Mitigate/Eliminate Them

(i) One reason why crimes against women continue to increase is that there is hardly any deterrent and the culprits feel that they can easily get away with anything. Imagine, in all the cases of dowry deaths in Delhi over the past four years, there has been only one conviction. And according to a social activist, out of the 6,500 cases registered, with the police on crime against women, there were only 1500 arrests, and all of them were released on bail. Moreover, statistics of the Police Research Bureau have recorded only 3 per cent convictions during the past 10 years, to say the least.

(ii) There have been scores of amendments and inclusion of various laws in the statute book to check this unhealthy trend. The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 has been amended twice to make its provision more punitive. The Indian Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code and the Indian Evidence Act have also been amended simultaneously to deal effectively not only with dowry death cases, but also with the cases of cruelty to married women. Similarly, the rape law also came to be modified to remove some of its drawbacks. All these measures, however, could not check the crime from further escalating. The objectives of these laws may not be faulted, but what is of crucial importance is their enforcement. A wide gap exists between laws with high social and economic purposes and their implementation on account of police inefficiency and widespread corruption. In this climate, the cutting edge of laws, both as instruments of crime prevention and that of social change, is bound to get blunted.

(iii) Legal remedies alone cannot cope with a regressive social-economic set-up in the absence of radical structural, social and economic reforms. which can be implemented only by mass mobilization and mass participation. With the kind of bureaucracy, police and political set-up that we have, the mere passing of laws will not deliver the goods. A struggle even for the implementation of the existing laws which can help to uphold, protect and promote the legitimate rights and demands of the women can be of much value.

(iv) It is also a matter of regret that the courts have, of late, begun to treat the accused with what might be described as irresponsible leniency. For instance, the Supreme Court has halved the sentence (from 10 to 5 years) of two constables convicted of raping a woman within the four walls of a police station only last year. This was done on the ground that the victim was "of questionable character and easy virtue." This is a definite retreat of the Supreme Court's own bold and socially conscious earlier directive, when it advised the lower judiciary not to hesitate in awarding the maximum penalty prescribed under the law in such cases. Apart from negating the serious views of custodial rape, the decision also nullifies the guidelines issued by the central government in late eighties to prevent police misbehaving with women.

(v) Long delays in law courts are also responsible for a spurt in crimes. It has been seen that often it takes years together for the cases to reach the final stage of disposal. During the course of pendency, most of the witnesses are either lured/scared away or evidence relevant to the case is destroyed by offenders. And for want of these, the cases fall flat. To prevent such a happening, cases like dowry deaths and rapes must be summarily tried by special courts to be set up for the purpose. These courts will certainly ensure speedy justice to victims not otherwise possible under the normal process of law which is not only time-consuming but also humiliating. Similarly, family courts, if set up, can also take care of many problems of married women.

(vi) Ironically, public response to violence against women is one of indifference. This is evident from the recent cold-blooded murder of a young school girl, Rinku Patil, by her boy friend and four of his accomplices in Ulhasnagar near Mumbai. In broad day-light four gun-totting youngsters walked into the

examination hall unmindful of police presence, poured petrol on the girl and set her on fire. Within minutes the living girl was reduced to lifeless ash in full public view. After performing this cruel deed, the criminals walked out without facing any resistance from the public.

In sum, there can be no two opinions about the need for stringent laws, sensitive judiciary, effective enforcement machinery and vigilant women's groups to deal with such atrocious crimes against women. But what is needed more than anything else is a "total revolution" in the thinking of society that always blames the women for the crime of which she is the victim, not the perpetrator.

PROGRAMMES FOR WOMEN WELFARE AT THE CENTRE AND STATE LEVELS

Of late, women all over the world have been agitating and struggling for their rights and privileges and initiating woman liberation movements to achieve their rightful place in their respective societies. The United Nations had declared 1975 as International Women Year and the period 1975-85 as the International Women Decade. March 8 is observed as Women's Day in our country every year. All these anniversaries and commemorative days are observed to focus the attention and concern of the governments and the society on the needs of women and the efforts required to meet them on their fundamental right to equality, the equal right to nutrition, health, education and opportunity, beginning with the right to survive. All these components are crucial to the all round development of the women and the community she lives in.

The centre and state governments and Union Territories administrations had launched a number of programmes for improving social and economic status of women, intensified efforts to maintain continuity and their progress and expanded them during women's Decade.

- (i) Various state governments, for instance, recognizing the role of integrated delivery of early childhood services had taken up centrally sponsored scheme of Integrated Child development Services for implementation in the states, the impact of which on the lives of children and mothers was evident in several crucial indicators-increased weight at birth, reduced incidence of malnutrition, increased immunization coverage, reduced infant mortality rate and decline in birth and death rates,
- (ii) launched the 20-Point Programmes which lays special emphasis on accelerated programmes for women welfare and nutrition programmes for pregnant women, nursing mothers specially in tribal, hilly and backward areas,
- (iii) set up Women and Children Development corporations,
- (iv) Construction of a number of women's hostel buildings by voluntary organizations with the aid given by the Central and State governments,
- (v) provision of crèches in conjunction with working women's hostels as well as in other establishments,

- (vi) various concessions, facilities for working women like relaxation on age limit in entering government services, special leave benefits, etc.,
- (vii) The Central Social Welfare Board, State Social Welfare Advisory Boards, Indian Council for Women welfare, All India Women's Conference, Bhartiya Grameen Mahila Sangh, Red Cross, Association for Social Health in India and other Voluntary Organizations were in existence long before the International Women's Decade, but during this decade these Organizations geared up their machinery and came up with novel programmes for women's welfare. Celebration of simple marriages and even mass-marriages, settlement of family disputes arising out of demand for more dowry and matrimonial problems have been receiving greater attention of all such Voluntary Welfare Organizations.
- (viii) Social maladies; social imbalances in the society call for providing greater social security to women. Women also have to suffer the backlash effects of growing problems of drug addiction and alcoholism. On the death of the drug-addict husband, the wife has to stand on her own and think of ways and means to steer the family through the crisis. Dowry deaths, bride burning, social improprieties, etc. have prompted: these Voluntary Welfare Organizations to work with more zeal and vigour for the eradication of such social evils and for creating social awakening, raising social values, improving social health so that women should live in complete social harmony.

SPECIAL LEGISLATIONS FOR WOMEN

/ With a view to improve the declining sex ratio and for containing the menace of female foeticides, the Government has brought into force at the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Regulation and Prevention of Misuse Act, 1994 with effect from 1st January 1996. The amendments to the Act made in 2002 brought the technique of pre-conception sex selection and use of ultra sound machines within the ambit of the Act, made punishments prescribed under the Act more stringent and empowered the authorities for search, seizure and sealing of the machines, equipments and records of violatory of the law. The equal Remuneration Act, 1976, was passed which provides for

- (a) the payment of equal remuneration to men and women workers;
- (b) prevention of discrimination on the ground of sex against women in the matter of employment and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- (c) The Hindu Marriage Act 1955 and the Special Marriage Act, 1955 had been amended by the Marriage Laws Amendment Act, 1976 to provide for the right to a girl to repudiate before attaining majority, her marriage as a child, whether the marriage has been consummated or not.

- (d) The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, was made more stringent.
- (e) The Child Marriage Restraint Amendment Act 1978 raises the age of the marriage for girls from 15 to 18 years and for boys from 18 to 21 years.
- (f) The Factories (Amendment) Act, 1976, provides for establishment of a Creche where 30 women are employed as against one for every 50 hitherto.
- (g) The Maternity Benefits Act 1961 was amended in April 1976 to cover women who do not fall within the purview of the Employee's State Insurance Act, 1948. •

The above legislative measures are expected to go a long way in removing social prejudices, social inequalities and social stigmas against women.

THE DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT OF MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

The Department of Women and Child Development is charged with the nodal responsibility to implement and coordinate programmes of women's welfare and development. It activates different Ministries/Departments both at the centre and state levels dealing with women's welfare and development programmes. It also initiates and intensifies measures to promote voluntary efforts in the field of women's development. The department besides playing a nodal role also implements the following schemes for the welfare and development of women Hostels for Working Women. With the progressive change in the economic structure of the country,

more and more women are moving from their homes in search of employment. One of the main difficulties faced by them is lack of suitable accommodation in a healthy and wholesome environment. Keeping in view the difficulties faced by such women, a Central Scheme of Assistance for Construction of Hostel Buildings for Working women was started in 1972. The scope of the Scheme was widened in 1980 by including a provision for Day-Care Centre's for children. Financial assistance to the extent of 50 per cent of the cost of land and 75 per cent of the cost of construction of the Hostels is given to Voluntary Organizations; Assistance on the same pattern, is also provided for the purchase of building to start hostel . Besides Voluntary Organizations, local bodies, Women's Development Corporations, Universities and Schools/Colleges of Social Work are eligible for financial assistance under this Scheme.

Employment and Income Generating Production Programme was started in 1982-83 to train women belonging to weaker sections of society and provide them employment on sustained basis. It is implemented through Public Sector Undertakings/Corporations/Autonomous Bodies voluntary Organizations. Assistance for the programme comes from Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD).

Women's Training Centre's/Institutes for the Rehabilitation of Women in Distress-Adversities of life arising out of economic, social, psychological and environmental situations affect women the worst. Young and old widows, unmarried mothers and victims of kidnapping are some of the vulnerable groups affected. Prolonged illnesses of the bread-earner or his being jailed for a crime and desertion by husbands are other reasons for destitution. With the objective to rehabilitate such women and their dependent children, a scheme was launched in 1977 to provide vocational training- cum-employment and residential care so that these women could become economically independent. The scheme envisages training of short duration not exceeding a year. The Scheme is a centrally sponsored one. The expenditure is shared between the Central Government, State Government and the implementing organizations in the ratio of 45:45:10. In the case of Union Territories, expenditure is shared between the Central Government and the implementing organization in the ratio of 90:10. Voluntary agencies registered as societies/trusts, district rural development agencies, Panchayats and other local bodies are eligible for assistance.

Short-stay Homes for Women and Girls-The Department gives grants-in-aid to voluntary organizations to establish and run Short-stay Homes, to protect and rehabilitate those women and girls, who are facing social and moral danger because of family problems, mental strain, social ostracism, exploitation or any other causes. Under the scheme services/facilities of Medical Care; Psychiatric treatment; Case-work services; Occupational therapy; Social Facilities of adjustment; and education, vocational and recreational activities are provided.

Family Life Institute

The Association for Social Health in India runs the Family Life Institute in Delhi. The major functions of this institute are counselling services and family life education for the maladjusted spouses, parents, unmarried youths, teenagers of unsettled and depressed mind, child drop-outs, etc. Pilot Project for Mobilising Public Opinion Against Trafficking and Elevation of Moral Standard in General. Under this project, financial assistance is given to enable the Association for Social Health in India to generate public opinion against trafficking and elevation of moral standard in general. Education Work for Prevention of Atrocities Against Women. Assistance under this Scheme is given to organizations working with women for their social uplift and betterment and for carrying out education work for the prevention of atrocities against women through propaganda, publicity and research work which comprise production and publication of educative journals, articles, books and other publicity materials like pamphlets, booklets, hoardings, posters, slogans, etc. depicting themes of violence against women, surveys/studies on particular aspects of violence/atrocities against women, awards to best films, short plays, short stories, poems and other creative efforts; dissemination of information or material in the form of films, books and other materials in regional languages and all activities connected therewith; holding of seminars/conferences/meetings/exhibitions, etc., training camps for social and other workers including Government functionaries; legal literacy training

camps, para-legal training and use of folk media to raise awareness related to violence against women such as street plays, puppetry and other traditional art forms.

Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)

A new omnibus scheme to render support to women's employment in various sectors such as agriculture, dairying, animal husbandry, fisheries, khadi and village industries, handlooms, handicrafts and sericulture, where women are preponderantly engaged in work, was formulated at the beginning of the Seventh Plan. The scheme focuses on the poorest, the most marginalised poor asset less women including wage labourers, unpaid family workers, female headed households, migrant labourers, tribal's and other dispossessed groups.

CONCLUSION

It is obvious from the analysis of the measures taken for the development and welfare of women that due partly to the social upsurge and change in attitudes manifesting themselves into various forms and ways, and partly due to the accompanying social, economic and legal measures, the woman in independent India has come to acquire a better status in the society. With the march of time and progress since independence, the woman has gradually come to acquire considerable emancipation from the complexities and ills with which she had been suffering for long. Today's woman has become to have better acceptability and respectability, better status of equality with men, better rights and privileges, better opportunities and avenues in all spheres of national life-social, economic and political.

In the emancipation and liberation of women, in the recognition of the legitimate place in the family and the society, in the recognition and protection of her interests, rights and privileges and in the gradual enhancement of her status, the law has played great role as an instrument of change.

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