

1. Examine the role of National Commission for Women in upliftment of women in India. Do you agree that legal measures are not sufficient to address the women issues? Explain.

Answer:

NCW was constituted on January, 31, 1992 as a statutory body in pursuance of the NCW Act, 1990 to safeguard the interests of women in India. NCW has a wide mandate covering almost all aspects of women's development and plays a pivotal role in studying and monitoring all matters relating to the Constitution and legal safeguards provided to women. It reviews the existing legislations and suggest amendments wherever necessary to meet any lacunae, inadequacies or shortcoming in such laws and also suggests fresh legislations. It looks into the complaints and takes suo-moto notice of cases involving deprivation of women's rights, etc, of women in order to provide them support, legal care and assistance. It also monitors the proper implementation of all the legislations made to protect the rights of women, so as to enable them to achieve equality in all spheres of life. The primary mandate of the Commission is to review the constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women, recommend remedial legislative measures, facilitate Redressal of grievances and advise the government on all policy matters affecting women.

In keeping with its mandate, the Commission has initiated various steps i.e.-

- Organised legal awareness camps on legal rights of women, etc.
- Sponsors Parivarik Mahila Lok Adalats and publicitised against female foeticide, violence against women, child marriages etc. in order to generate awareness among women about these issues.
- Launched Mahila Adhikar Abhiyan in Rajasthan.
- Concentrated not only on women's empowerment but also on their growth and development including health care and education.

The constitutional and legislative provisions in India not only grants equality and protection to women, but also empower the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women.

The government of India has enacted several women-specific legislations to uphold the constitutional mandate and to protect women against social discrimination, violence and atrocities and also to prevent social evils like child marriages, dowry, rape, practice of sati, etc. The 'crime against women' under various legislations of government of India could be broadly classified within two categories: First, the crimes identified under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) which includes Rape; Kidnapping & Abduction for different purposes; Homicide for dowry, dowry deaths or their attempts; Sexual harassment, etc. Secondly, the crimes identified under the Special Laws (SLL) which are though not gender specific, but do have special provisions to safeguard women and their interests. It includes The Employees State Insurance Act, The Family Courts Act, 1954; Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956; Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961; The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1983; etc.

But over the years, discriminations against women in various forms has reached epic proportions. The maternal mortality rate is estimated at 200 per 100,000 live births (2010) in India compared to figures of 35 in Sri Lanka, 37 in China and 59 in Vietnam; the growing female face of HIV/AIDS is reflected in the fact that the number of pregnant women (between 18-24 years) with HIV prevalence comprise 0.86 % in 2003 of the total women pregnant compared to 0.74% in 2002. The saga of missing daughters is vividly depicted in the growing incidence of female foeticide as a result of which the child sex ratio has declined from 927 in 2001 to 914 in 2011. Prenatal tests to determine the sex of the fetus were criminalized by Indian law in 1994, but the above mentioned imbalances in the sex ratio at birth, clearly point to gender selective abortions. While abortion is officially illegal in India there are some exceptions to this rule such as the failure of contraceptive device used by a couple; if the woman was raped; or if the child would suffer from severe disabilities. In total 11 million abortions take place annually and around 20,000 women die every year due to abortion related complications.

Further the literacy rates have shown an improvement from 54.3% to 65.46% of the total female population between 2001 and 2011, yet much more needs to be done especially for socially and economically backward regions and groups.

Economic empowerment as reflected by the work participation rate shows that the percentage of women in the work force increased by only 3% (from 22.5% to 25.7%) between 1991 and 2001. Participation of women in the workforce is only 13.9% in the urban sector and 29.9% in the rural sector.

Women's wage rates are, on an average only 75 % of men's wage rates and constitute only 25% of the family income.

This clearly depicts that legislation alone is not going to stop discrimination against women from occurring. There is a mismatch between the existence of good laws and their actual implementation.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Answer the following Questions

1. India's neighborhood policy should include Pakistan as well. Discuss, in the light of recent improvement in relations between India and its neighbours. (250 words)
2. Examine the reasons behind acute groundwater shortage in India and suggest steps to deal with the situation? (250 words)