

1. According to a recent UN report, the average age of death for Dalit women in India is 39.5. Critically analyse the economic and social stresses experienced by Dalit women in India and solutions needed to empower them. (250 Words)

Answer:

Background:-

- In the 2011 census, the Dalit population was estimated at 200 million. Assuming the female Dalit population at 130 million, as a group, they would form the 10th largest country. Thus the imperative to focus on the need to empower these women.

Economic stresses faced by Dalit women are :-

- Because of the current structure of labour laws, dis-incentivizing formal labour markets and hiring, India has an extremely asymmetric and disproportionately informal labour market. So Dalit women are also more likely to be trapped at the lowest levels in the informal labour market.
- Lacking the social networks that enable upward mobility in the labour market, they are often relegated to the lowest paying, hard physical labour under exploitative conditions by middlemen.
- The informal sector leaves Dalit women in a poor position to access the economic growth resulting from market liberalization.
- Dalit women record higher work Participation Rate than that of their non-Dalit counterparts but high wage gap between SC and non-SC/ST women, concentration of Dalit women workers in agricultural sector and elementary occupations show that most of the Dalit women are deprived of high-salaried positions. So they stay poor.
- Unemployment rate is higher among the Dalit women with graduate and above degrees and this condition is acute in the rural areas.
- Dalit women earn for their families, but they have no control over their earnings.

Social stresses:-

- Dalit women are often among the poorest sections of society and tend to have lower access to sanitation, drinking water, or basic healthcare services.
- **Caste discrimination:-**
 - Dalit women and their children are routinely denied medical care as upper castes refuse to treat them.
 - Caste system declares Dalit women as impure and untouchables. Most of them work as manual scavengers, landless agricultural labourers, domestic helpers and casual labourers.
 - Dalit women in South Asia (India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh) face systematic and structural discrimination thrice over as Dalit, as women and as poor.
- **Violence:-**
 - Dalit women are more likely to experience physical and sexual violence at home, in their immediate neighbourhoods, and at the workplace.
 - According to the National Crime Records Bureau, four Dalit women are raped every day in India.
- **Health issues:-**
 - Low age at marriage and high fertility has a direct impact on the health outcomes. Dalit women record low Body Mass Index (BMI), higher prevalence of anaemia and low access to maternal health care facilities.
 - Hardly 35 percent SC women get the facility of institutional delivery during the child birth and a large number of them rely on indigenous methods and stay at homes during the delivery.
 - Mainly husbands and in-laws take decisions regarding their health.
- Despite legislative prohibition of manual scavenging, the state has institutionalised the practice with local governments and municipalities employing manual scavengers.

- The reality of Dalit women and girls is one of exclusion and marginalization, which perpetuates their subordinate position in society and increases their vulnerability, throughout generations.

Measures taken :-

- India has various affirmative policies for the socially marginalised groups and women and also ensures the right to education for all, Stand up India, Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) etc.

Solutions needed are:-

- Sensible labour laws reforms to give exit options to Dalit women trapped in a system.
- Integrating social and cultural transformation with an economic alternative is critical.
- Huge investments will be needed in upskilling and educating women and government needs to create an abundance of new jobs within the formal sector and lowering barriers to job creation
- Increased availability of stable-wage jobs for women is critical to preventing their socio-economic exploitation
- **With bridging the deep-rooted biases through sustained reconditioning:-**
 - It is only possible by promoting the idea of gender equality and uprooting social ideology of male child preferability.
- They should be given decision-making powers and due position in governance. Thus, the Women Reservation Bill should be passed as soon as possible to increase the effective participation of women in the politics of India.
- **Bridging implementation gaps:**
 - Government or community-based bodies must be set up to monitor the programs devised for the welfare of the society.
- Dalit women need group and gender specific policies and programmes to address the issue of multiple deprivations.
 - Dalit women require comprehensive policies on health, especially on the maternal and child health
- Make credit available by pooling the women to form self help groups. The example of Kudumbashree model of Kerala can be emulated.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Answer the following Questions

1. A well-informed public can serve as a watchdog more effectively than existing banking regulatory bodies. In the light of recent banking crisis and resultant issues, comment on the statement. (250 Words)
2. In the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index 2017-18 report, which measures the extent to which 113 countries have adhered to the rule of law in that period, the survey found that 71 out of the 113 countries have dropped in score. Does this indicate failure of international bodies, laws and conventions in protecting human rights across the world? Examine. (250 Words)