

The Status of Destitute women in Society

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Abstract : On investigating sacred writings (scriptures) it is said that in the beginning, God made women to be an aide for man, as she was a companion for him rather than to be alone. She is called woman as she was taken out of man. A general consideration about man in society was “Man is the image and magnificence of God, but woman is the glory of man”. Christ is the head of every man and man is considered as head to woman. St. Paul in his communication to Colossians had written the following statement. “Wives submit herself completely to his own husband as it was like all living things surrender their loyalty to Lord”. No girl in the world was born as a destitute, only the circumstances that leads her to the state of destitution.

IndexTerms - Society, Women, Employment, Dowry, destitute, Widows, Prostitution, Torture.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of gender inequality is one which has been publicly reverberating through society for years. However, the position, status & condition of Indian women remain more or less unchanged.

Restrictions on social freedom:

The term social freedom refers to women’s desire to be free from social taboos. Conventions, rituals & rates which provide them I lower status in society. For century’s women has been treated as weak and has not been given equal opportunity in education, employment and other fields. These reasons have entitled women as the weaker section of the society¹.

Due to the social evils which are still prevailing in our society, most of Indian women are either widows, deserted wives, victims of dowry, victims of rape, etc.. The Government of Tamil Nadu estimate about 10000 women in the age group of 20-44 tears becomes destitute every year. But the number may not be accurate since the government estimates only those who are benefitted from the rehabilitation schemes. There are other women who are not are of the welfare measures of the government and voluntary agencies. It is a fact that these helpless women are vulnerable to pimps on brothels owners and most of them are cured into prostitution².

Position of women in society

In our general public where the rich winding up more wealthier the poor ending up more poorer, the quantity of destitute women has been expanding at a alarming rate day by day because of the lasting issues like poverty, unemployment and to shocking breakdowns of the families. A large number of them are widows, deserted wives and those redeemed from the grasp of prostitution. They are seen much beneath the privileged class of beggars as such they are driven to the simplest way of unethical activity to manage themselves. The majority of destitute women rise up from the lower middle class with certain common features and they are inadequate basic education and inability to lead life independently. Lack of basic education and joblessness are the significant danger to be experienced by these desperate ladies. ³

These women are drawn from the fringe groups of societies. They are the ones who had been a failure in life and numerous components are owing to this disappointment such as child marriage, dowry torture, rape, unwedded motherhood, widows, prostitution, separated wives, battered wives, desertion, kidnapping and abduction⁴.

Aside from the previously mentioned realities still there are more factors responsible to drive them out of their homes, and they are the poor monetary conditions, stranded family relationship, broken homes and so on. ⁵ Taking advantage of the innate qualities of tenderness and tolerance in women, the destitutes are stretched too far and the society ignores the inner claims of these women. ²These women are marked as destitutes and are called by an exceptional name by this general public. They are boycotted by society in this manner restricting them taking an interest in any essential social functions.

If the destitute women happen to be a poor dowager our respectable society takes a gander at her in a different edge as an immortal person. Besides other things, the most essential and first issue these dejected women fear to confront is the issue of social uncertainty and loneliness. The general public does not acknowledge these destitute women as social equivalents for they don't have status of a "wife" who by virtue of it enjoys social security and a feeling of acknowledgment by the society at large ¹. These destitute women are more inclined and defenseless against the eyes of the pimps and are tricked to immortal traffic.

These pimps and the brother keepers go as one and flourish with the open door for their livelihood by these destitute women. These women cannot dare say or testify against the individuals who abused them for the simple reason they are destitute women and society does not by any means mind on the off chance that they are assaulted, attacked or raped ⁶. The dowagers who are young, face issues form anti-social elements and need satisfactory emotional and social care.

Dowry System

Indian society is surrounded with illiteracy, terrorism, unemployment, ect. Among these, a problem which is deeply rooted is dowry system. Living among constant threats, torture, humiliation and harassment, women in India. Suffers, leading to social imbalance and emotional breakdown.

In cases where girl's parents are unable to meet the demands of dowry, the girl suffers at the hands of her groom's family and this initiates the art of violence in the society. In such cases either the girl returns to her parents finds a destitute home for herself.

Dowry system has imposed an invisible chain upon the freedom and self-respect of women and continues to haunt them since time eternal. Dowry system does not affect the bride alone. Rather, its ordeal extends to builds parents and they have to bear the financial demands of their counter parts to insure well of being of their child.

Since it is considered as a crime and causes intense suffering preventive measures like dowry prohibition law's should be enforced in the dowry system⁷.

Child Marriage

Child marriage is a violation of child rights, and has a negative impact on physical growth, health, mental and emotional development and educational opportunities. Child Marriage restraint Act 1929 fixed the age of marriage for girls at 14 years & boys at 18 years which was later amended to 18 for girls and 21 for boys. It is popularly known as the "The Sarda Act".

However, due to lack of inadequate communication the information of law did not reach the villages. The right social structure of the villages made it impossible for the members of the community to lodge a complain against the violator. Therefore, the practice of child marriage continued in most of our Indian Villages.

This is another form of women exploitation as it leads to early motherhood high infant & mortality rates, mal nutrition, illiteracy ,etc⁸.

Prostitution:

The Modern civilization has brought to light many social vices. The act of prostitution is one of the ancient vice and has existed in India since countries, have undergone change within its nature, intensity & issues concerning it.

The commercialization of this old profession is a recent phenomenon. The emphasis on child marriage, denial of widow remarriage, dowry system and inadequate opportunities for women, has always been the major factors contributing to the spread of this social evil⁹.

Widows:

Widowhood is one of the serious issues in our society. This issue has been disregarded for long and society has turned out to be insusceptible to such problems. After the marriage, these women who perhaps had led a comfortable life, enjoys secured feeling provided by her husband but after his demise all of a sudden they had turned out to be desolate, insecure and rudderless. Vast majority of the dowagers confront numerous issues like food, shelter, clothing, education and marriage of their children, loss of status etc. ¹⁰

Social savagery including violence related to dowry is the reason behind women to become destitute. Dowry is an old custom and its underlying foundations are hidden in antiquity in its historical perspective it seems to have been justified way of compensating a daughter who was otherwise debarred from inheriting parental property

Parents give dowry since they need to face and follow the custom prevailing in the society. Level of satisfaction of dowry demands often, financial limitations compel parents to succumb to repeated and unreasonable demands of dowry by the groom and for his family to enable their daughters to be subjected to torture, harassment and humiliation of all sorts.

The fact is that dowry demands emerge out of monetary challenges, greed, aspirations and exploitative tendencies. Excuses compensating mismatches, failures and dissatisfactions in married life¹¹.

Conclusion:

The problems for the destitute women in Tamil Nadu were multifaceted. As implies in most of the proceeding papers that clearly pictures their status in terms of helpless, hopeless, easily exploited, discriminated and oppressed. These devaluating factors are the main reasons for the escalation of crimes against these sectors of women. We should not blame the society alone as the responsible reason for these crimes against these women but also the destitute women themselves who stand as stumbling blocks, hindering the growth process.

In recent years, women were actively participating in political movements. There are many examples for women's who have been served as national leaders, presidents and members of the party and working committees. They also actively participate in the building of the nation on all levels including the village councils, local and district boards. Thus it was evident that these women not only participate in such movements, but influencing policy making at the administrative level.

On considering the education sector, women play an outstanding role and there was a great deal of advancement was attained by these women's. Thus this education was considered as one of the most crucial weapon which can defend a woman against the many evils against her. In most of the middle-class families education has been accepted to train women to face the society and to employ them.

Thus educational advancement automatically leads to the economical development. The educating women will helps them to secure good positions in society in terms of occupational status and thus they were financially independent. Today, women hold good position in society as administrators and occupying various professions to work equal to men. Thus, majority of the educated women were financially sound and economically independent.

The various social organizations both government and non-government plays important role in the welfare of destitute women. The Government of Tamil Nadu has taken steps to help every women to built a positive self image and self confidence to cultivate and nurture one's creative abilities. They have developed the women to actively participate in group activities for changing the social thereby achieving their aspiration.

Employment opportunities for these women should comprise for the major part self-employment and for a smaller number were employment. In rural areas self Employment should Centre on the crafts of tailoring, leather work, shoe making, basket weaving, net making, wood work as well as farm activities such as keep poultry and animal husbandry.

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