

Evolution of Women's rights in India

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ABSTRACT

In the past, women's had not equal rights. In fact women's experience violence, crime discrimination and exploitation. In past times women followed certain norms and traditions that put many limitations on them. Because Indian society is a male dominated society. Non discrimination is an essential to the realisation of women's rights. Through this paper we studied about women's status in different era from Vedic era to present time and know about evaluation of women's rights. In past times woman faces many social problems but now government gives equal status to women with giving them equal rights. The Constitution is the basic document which governs our rights and lays down the structure by which we are governed. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar is referred to as the Father of the Indian Constitution as he headed the Constituent Assembly and played an important part is including individual and political rights against the state as well as group rights / socio-cultural rights of the marginalised section. The aim of writing this paper is to spread awareness about women's rights and historical evaluation of women rights in India.

1. Introduction

People were not only discriminated due their race but some of their gender. Rights are very important for women in all the world. Through rights we can achieve gender equality. Indian society is known as male dominated society. Women were not always treated horribly in India. This section of the paper traces the evolution of women's rights in India.

1) Ancient History-

A significance period in early Indian history was the Vedic period which lasted from 1500 to 1000 B.C. During this time Vedas were composed. Vedas was the foundational scriptures and hymns for Hinduism. The Vedas are comprised of four booms the Rig- Veda, the Sama- Veda ,the Yajur-Veda and the Atharva-Veda.

During the Vedic period, daughters were less desirable than son. In the Vedic period people believed that son's could contribute more to the family. Sons were valued because of their physical strength. This preference for boys is reflected in sacred literature including the Atharva Veda. However although daughter were less preferable than sons, girls were still valued by their families for example one of hymns encouraged a widow to rise up ,rather than giving up because of her husband was dead. Widows was guardian of their families which show their strength. In Vedic age, society also promote girls for education. In short , the Vedic period was a good time for women but they were not had a equal status in society.

Aryan incursion, overlapped the Vedic period Aryan society emphasis on holiness. At that time caste system come into force and society divided into so many parts which is called social stratification. India is known by its diversities and different different religions for example Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism and Christianity.The Mahabarata and Ramayana are two major Hindu epics. Both the Mahabarata, the Ramanaya gives us clues about how women's were treated in ancient India. In RamanyaSita presents questions about the value of women. The Mahabharata and the Ramanyaemphasis

the importance of marriage. In the stories unmarried woman could not enter into heaven, no matter how intelligent she was.

2)The spread of Islam-

Due to Islam, India divided into two parts Hindus and Muslims. When Muslims invaded India , the status of women also declined. Due to Muslims social norms affects women badly. Certain aspects of Islam seem to defend the value of women under Islamic law , women are socially and legally inferior to men. Sharia law allows to men legally give divorce to his wife simply pronouncing three time "Talakat" (I divorce you) which is known as triple talaq. Under Islamic law women were allow to wear "Burka" for hiding herself from other mens. Women were not allow to get education at that time in muslim countries. In short Islam played a important role in transforming Indian culture and view about women.

3) British occupation:

In 1765 East India Company become strongest power in India. In 1784 "The India Act" was passed. East India Company control on parliamentary powers through this act. In British era many Indians were forced to change his religion and converted to Christianity. British exploited India very well socially as well as economically. Indian resources were exploited for the benefits of Britishers. They introduced schools and railways, only rich people can afford education which widened the gap between poor and rich.

a) The father of India:

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is known as father of the nation is also called Mahatama and Bapu Gandhi. Gandhi fought for India's freedom through peaceful ways. Gandhi defended women's rights because he fought for a society where everyone was equal. He also promote women for fight against British. Gandhi held revolutionary views on the role and power of women. He was against child marriage and the dowry system. He supported to women's to get education. Gandhi hi

wanted to unite India rather than divided India into two parts Hindu and Muslim because at that time Britishers use policy against Indian's known as "Divide and Rule"

b) Independence and the Partition:

The partition took effect on midnight between August 14 and 15 August 1947, while Pakistan celebrated its Independence Day on 14 August. This partition was the bloodiest migration in history on the basis of religion. Approximately ten to fifteen million people moved and almost one million civilians lost their lives because of the religious riots.

c) The Age of Nehru:

Jawaharlal Nehru become the first prime minister of India from 1947 to 1964. Nehru made significant social and economic changes. He promote secularism in government and want to unite India after partition. Nehru formed a National Planning Commission who create a series of Five year Economics and Social plans for India's industrial development. Nehru's daughter Indira Gandhi succeeded Lal Bhadr Shastri, becoming India's first female Prime Minister from 1966 to 1977 and again 1980 to 1984.

d) The structure of Indian Government:

India had 28 states and 9 union territories. In India there is a centralised divided into two part's centre and states but states are under the centre. Centre any time interfere in the subjects related to state, in India form of government is Democratic and President is the National Head of India who is elected indirectly and the real head of the country is Prime Minister who is directly elected by voters. In legislative assembly there is two houses Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha. There is a custom that Prime Minister elected from Lok Sabha. At present total number of Lok Sabha seats is 543. A total of 131 seats (24.03%) 84 are reserved for representatives of scheduled castes (84) and scheduled tribes (47). The newly elected 17th Lok Sabha has 78 women members, highest since independence out of the 716 women candidates who contested elections, 78 have been elected which is 14% of the house. In comparison, the last election data shows that in 2014, 11.23 percent of women won, and in 2019 it is around 14.58 percent. Of the 8,251 contestants in 2014, 668 were women (and 62 won), whereas the 2019 elections saw 8,049 candidates, of which 724 were women. While we hope to see 33 percent reservation in the government being fully taken advantage of, we celebrate these women who are going to be the representative for millions of women in india. A total of 34 women MPs in Parliament will be from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which had fielded 53 women candidates. In comparison, All India Trinamool Congress (TMC) had fielded 41 percent of women candidates while Biju Janata Dal (BJD) had fielded 33 percent. Here are the women who are going to be the representatives in the Lower House. Newbie Mimi Chakraborty, fielded by AITC, well-known model and actor from West Bengal, beat Anupam Hazra of BJP in Jadavpur. Making her debut alongside 30-year-old Mimi this year was 29-year-old Nusrat Jahan, a model and a prominent actor in the Bengali film industry, from Basirhat, West Bengal

. Smriti Irani who joined BJP in 2003 took on Rahul Gandhi in Amethi this year even though she lost to him in 2014. She managed to defeat the three-time parliamentarian from the Nehru-Gandhi family seat and Congress stronghold, Amethi. Hema Malini like her feisty character Basanti from Sholay, rode to victory in Mathura on the BJP ticket. Kirron Kher, a familiar face on television, was elected to the Lok Sabha in 2014 from Chandigarh, and this was a repeat of the same. As many as 222 women contested the polls independently. Four transgender candidates contested the elections independently. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was the only party to field a transgender nominee, but all transgender candidates lost in the polls.

There is a total member in Rajya Sabha is 224 and total number of women member of women member is 24 that is only 10% of total number of Rajya Sabha. In 1993, a constitutional amendment was passed in India that called for a random one third of village council leader, or Sarpanch positions in Gram Panchayat to be reserved for women. The Women's Reservation Bill or the constitution (108 amendment) Bill, 2008, passed in the parliament of India which propose to amend the constitution of India to reserve 33% of all seats in the lower house and all state legislative assemblies for women. The Rajya Sabha passed the bill on 9 March 2010. However the Lok Sabha never voted on the bill. The bill is still pending.

2. Legal Analysis:

1. Overview of the India Constitution and women rights.

Before independence, the administration of India was being run by the laws passed by the British Parliament in which there was no representatives of Indians. During the freedom movement, the demand of constituent assembly for making the constitution of India was being raised by Indians. On December 13, 1946 in the third meeting of Constituent Assembly Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had introduced objective resolution. The objective resolution was accepted by the constituent assembly on January 22, 1947. Having prepared the draft of the constitution of India, the drafting committee presented it before the constituent assembly on February 21, 1948. From January 21, 1948 to November 4, 1948. A national debate was held on the Draft Constitution. From November 15, 1948 to October, 1949, every article of the draft constitution was discussed in detail. During this time, 7635 amendments were presented out of which 2473 amendment's were discussed.

After adaptation of the constitution on November 26, 1949 constitution implemented and come into force in 26 January 1950. November 26 is celebrated as voters day and 26 January celebrated as Republic Day. In Indians constitution equally gives fundamental rights to everyone no discrimination on the basis on gender, race, caste, class.

(Saudi Arabia, in 2011, became the most recent country in 21st country to grant women's suffrage and also lifted the ban women's driving in June 2018, which needed steps.)

Here is list of fundamental rights are give in Indian constitution and also list of Directive principles of state policy which helps the women.

Fundamental Rights

Article 14	Equality before law and equal protection of the law Exceptions: Doctrine of Classification
Article 15	No discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth. Exceptions: 15 (3) The State can make special provision for women and children
Article 16	Equality of opportunity of all citizens in matters relating to employment to any office under the State
Article 17	Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden
Article 18	Abolition of Titles
Article 19	Freedom - 1a freedom of speech, 1b. Assemble without arms, 1c form association 1d freedom of movement 1e to reside or settle in any part of India. 1g. practice any profession or carry on any occupation
Article 20	Protection on arrest and detention
Article 21	Right to Life and Personal Liberty. It includes right to clean and wholesome environment
Article 22	Rights of arrested Person
Article 23	Right against exploitation. Traffic in human and forced labour
Article 24	Prohibition of employment of children in factories

Directive Principles of State Policy

- Article 38 - Promotion of welfare of the people
- Article 39 and 39A - Equal Justice and free Legal Aid
- Article 40 - Village Panchayat
- Article 41 - Right to Work, Educate and Public Assistance
- Article 42- Just and human condition of work and maternity
- Article 43- Wages of worker and participation in management
- Article 44- Uniform Civil Code
- Article 45- Free compulsory education for children
- Article 46 - Education, economic interest of SC, ST and weaker sections
- Article 47- Level of nutrition, standard of living, public health
- Article 48 - Agriculture and Animal Husbandry
- Article 48A - Improve our environment and safeguard forest
- Article 49- Monuments, Places and Objects of National Importance
- Article 50 - Separation of Judiciary from Executive
- Article 51 - International Peace and Security

What is the Difference between Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles?

If a fundamental right is violated, a citizen who is affected or anyone else in public interest can approach a higher court and get it struck down. The Directive Principles are not binding on the state, but these principles must reflect in all state policies.

However, if these are violated, there is no right to go to court and get it strike down.

Which are the important provisions which protect dignity of women?

Article 21 which deals with right to life has been expanded to include the right to Life with Dignity. This provision has been invoked to safeguard the rights of women such as right to divorce, to live a life free from violence and the right to safe abortions.

Article 51A of the Constitution lays down fundamental duties of all citizens. It stipulates that all citizens have a duty to promote harmony and to renounce practices which are derogatory to the dignity of women.

Provisions in Indian constitution for women empowerment :-

Article 14 – Equality before law – Provides equal legal protection for women.

Article 15(3) – Special provisions for women.

Article 16 – Equal opportunities for all citizens in public employment irrespective of caste, sex, religion.

Article 23 – Prohibits traffic in human beings & forced labour.

Article 39 – The citizen, men & women equally have the right to an adequate means of livelihood.

Article 40 – 1/3 rd of seats in Panchayats shall be reserved for women.

Article 42 – State shall make provisions for just and humane working conditions & maternity relief.

Article 44 – Uniform civil code for the citizens throughout the territory of India to safeguard women from laws of religion.

Article 51 A (e) – One of the duties of every citizen is to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of woman.

3. Diagramming of Violations of Women’s Rights

The areas that violate the rights of women in India have been stated as follows: (Saryal, 2014).

Missing of Women and Girls –In many states of India, women and girls go missing. One of the primary reasons that lead to their missing is trafficking. When girls are trafficked, they are severely exploited and are deprived of food and other basic necessities. The girls belonging to the poverty stricken families are sold by the brokers to men in northern India, where the problem of imbalanced gender ratio is much apparent. The occurrence of violent and criminal acts against women within the house and outside, primarily lead to their absence. As per Crime in India, a total of 1,74,021 women in year 2016, 1,88,382 in 2017 and 2,23,621 in 2018 have been registered as ‘missing

Dowry Deaths – In India, there has been an increase in the dowry deaths of women in their matrimonial homes. India has by far the highest number of dowry-related deaths in the world according to Indian National Crime Record Bureau. In 2012, 8,233 dowry death cases were reported across India. This means a bride was burned every 90 minutes, or dowry issues cause 1.4 deaths per year per 100,000 women in

India. According to a 1996 report by Indian police, every year it receives over 2,500 reports of bride-burning. The Indian National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reports that there were 8,331 dowry death cases registered in India in 2011. Incidents of dowry deaths during the year 2008 (8,172) have increased by 14.4 per cent over the 1998 level (7,146), while India's population grew at 17.6% over the 10-year period.

Domestic Violence – There has been prevalence of domestic violence in India, in spite of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. Domestic violence is, when a woman experiences violent and criminal acts at the hands of their husbands, in-laws, fathers, brothers or other family members. These include, verbal abuse, physical abuse, and inflicting various forms of mistreatment. New Delhi, Jan 9 (IANS) Domestic violence against women figures as the top category of violence against women in 2018, according to data from the "Crimes in India - 2018" report compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). As per the data, a total of 89,097 cases related to crimes against women was registered across India in 2018. The figures indicate not much has improved when compared to the figure of 86,001 cases registered under this head in 2017. The crime rate per lakh women population is 58.8 in 2018 in comparison to 57.9 in 2017. "Crime Rate" is calculated by dividing the number of cases reported by the population size in lakhs.

Sati – Sati is a practice, when the widows were placed in the funeral pyres of their husbands. This practice was abolished by the social reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy. It continues to prevail in the post-colonial India. The Sati Prevention Act was passed which declared the practice of Sati as a crime for which death penalty can also be given to the perpetrators. The act also declared that the veneration of Sati by erecting a temple and worshipping of the deceased women as a God is also prohibited. However, certain sections of individuals perceive this law as intervention in their right to practice the dictates of their religion.

Child Marriage – Child marriage is when the marriage of girls takes place, when they are below 18 years of age and when boys are below 21 years of age. Child marriage is regarded as a practice that deprives the girls of their childhood. They experience problems in the acquisition of education, getting enrolled in school, taking pleasure in other childhood activities and in enhancing their skills and abilities. It also affects the social, psychological and emotional development of the child in a negative way. Child Marriage Act 2006, prohibits child marriage and declares 18 as the marriageable age for girls and 21 for boys.

Preference for a Male Child – The individuals, who belong to rural communities and socio-economically backward sections of the society, normally give preference to the male child. They regard males to be the assets of the family and possess the viewpoint that they will contribute in generating welfare and enhancing reputation of their families. The preference for the male child is a phenomenon, which is historically rooted in the patriarchal system of the Indian society.

Female Foeticide and Female Infanticide – Female foeticide is referred to the killing of the girl child, before she is born and female infanticide is killing of the girl child, after she is born. These practices, deny the basic right from the girl child,

i.e. the right to live. The frequency of female foeticide in India is increasing day by day. The natural sex ratio is assumed to be between 103 and 107, and any number above it is considered as suggestive of female foeticide.

Education – The right to education under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution have made it obligatory for the government to provide free education to all the individuals. In rural areas, the retention rate of girls in schools is lower as compared to males and there are number of reasons that lead to drop-out of girls, as they move to higher classes. In higher education, the primary reason that lead to their drop-out is, parents are unable to afford education, due to financial problems. Parents expect their girls to take care of their younger siblings, as they go to work, they train them regarding the performance of the household chores, increasing cost of education and parents feel that girls would be married off, hence, they will not be able to utilise their learning.

Forced Evictions and Exclusions – In India, widows are evicted from their marital homes and they are meant to look after their needs and requirements on their own, after the death of their husbands. Their children too get evicted along with them. Women headed households and women in general are less secure as compared to men. When they are evicted from homes, they are required to face all hardships and difficulties in order to provide for their sustenance. A single woman, with no land or family to take care of, often ends up in an urban slum.

Sexual Harassment at the Workplace – The occurrence of sexual harassment at the workplace is considered as the most detrimental problem that impose barriers within the course of their progression. In India, women are discriminated against in terms of pay and remuneration for their jobs. This is a fact for both urban and rural areas, they are mistreated in concerns of promotion and advancement within the employment setting. Sexual harassment at the workplace hampers the psychological approach of a woman. She even gets compelled to leave her job, even though she is not financially strong and is in need of a job.

Rape - Women reported almost 34,000 rapes in 2018, barely changed from the year before. Just over 85 per cent led to charges, and 27 per cent to convictions, according to the annual crime report released by the Ministry of Home Affairs. One woman reported a rape every 15 minutes on an average in India in 2018. The highly publicised gang rape and murder of a woman in a bus in New Delhi in 2012 brought tens of thousands onto the streets across India and spurred demands for action from film stars and politicians, leading to harsher punishments and new fast-track courts. But the violence has continued unabated. In India, there has been a significant increase in the numbers of rape cases in the past 10 years. Rape normally takes place out of animosity, enmity, resentment or any other reason

Societal Violence against Women - The communities and the societies in India in most of the places are bound up with the patriarchal normative structure. In these types of societies, it becomes difficult for women to establish their position and obtain justice. The religious communities, village communities or the artificial communities like professional bodies are differentiated of equality between men and women. With the prevalence of societal violence, women usually get confined within their homes and become isolated from the

outside world. They are required to curb their communications with the members of the society.

4. Fundamental Rights to Uplift the Status of Women

The Articles under Part III of the constitution of India, relating to the Fundamental Rights which try to improve the status of women and provide equal opportunities for them are stated as follows: (Chapter III, n.d.).

According to Article 14 of the Constitution of India - All individuals, including women are equal in the eyes of the law and they are also entitled to enjoy equal protection of laws within the territorial jurisdiction of India. It signifies that all persons irrespective of gender, should be treated equally in similar circumstances. The State should not make any discrimination between one person and another, and the law should be administered equally.

Article 15 of the Constitution of India deals with prohibition against discrimination - It prohibits the state to make any types of discrimination against any citizen including women on grounds of race, caste, gender, ethnicity, religion, place of birth and socio-economic background. It states that all citizens are entitled to enjoy equal rights regarding access to shops, hotels, restaurants, banks, infrastructure, public places etc. But the state has the right to make any special provisions for women and children and also for, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes.

According to Article 16 of the Constitution of India - All citizens including, women will enjoy equality of opportunity in matters of public employment, irrespective of their gender, races, castes, ethnicity, religions and socio-economic backgrounds. There are certain exceptions, i.e. Parliament may prescribe by law that residence within the state is required for a particular employment. The State is empowered to reserve certain posts for backward classes and also for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and appointment in connection with a religious organisation may be reserved for persons belonging to that religion.

As per Article 17 of the Constitution of India - The System of untouchability is eliminated and Untouchability (offence) Act of 1955 was enacted by the parliament. This Act was amended by Untouchability (offence) Amendment Act 1976, to make the law more stringent to remove untouchability from the society.

According to Article 19 of the Constitution of India, every citizen including

women have the right to freedom of speech and expression, to assemble peacefully and without arms, to form unions or associations, to move freely throughout the country, to reside or settle down in any part of the country and to practise any profession or to carry on any lawful trade or business in accordance to one's own aspirations.

As per Article 21 of the Constitution of India - No person shall be deprived of life or personal liberty, except according to the procedure established by law. This right to life, includes right to live with dignity, right to privacy etc. Domestic violence against women is also derogatory to Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, because it weakens the self-respect and dignity of women, who are victims.

According to Article 21A of the Constitution of India - The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children, who are between the ages of six to fourteen years in a manner, as the state may determine by law.

To provide facility to the women accused - As per Article 20 of the Constitution of India, no person including women shall be convicted of any offence except for violation of a law and any person shall not be prosecuted and punished for the same offence more than once. Any person should not be accused of any offence, he or she shall be compelled to be a witness against himself or herself.

To prevent immoral trafficking in women and girl child Article 23 of the Constitution of India - Prohibits the traffic in human beings and forced labour. In pursuance of this Article, Parliament has passed the Suppression of Immoral Trafficking in women and Girls Act, 1956, which is now renamed as the immoral Trafficking (Prevention) Act 1956, for punishing the actions, which result in trafficking inhuman beings.

To prohibit child labour, especially girl child as per Article 24 of the Constitution of India - Employment of children, below the age of fourteen years in factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment is prohibited.

Under Article 25 of the Constitution of India - All persons including women are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right of freedom to profess, practice, and propagate religion.

5. List of Amendments and Acts which made through Indian constitution for women's

Section 14 of the Hindu Succession Act 1956 – Property of a female Hindu to be her absolute property.

Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act 2005 – Women get equal share in the ancestral property.

Dowry prohibition Act, 1961.

Contract Labour Act, 1970 & Factories Act, 1948 – Women can't be employed in the night between 9pm to 6am. – Women cannot be required to work for more than 9hrs.

Equal remuneration Act, 1976.

The indecent representation of women (prohibition) Act, 1986.

Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987.

Protection of women from domestic violence Act, 2005.

Maternity Benefits Act, 1961.

Child marriage (prohibition) Act, 1929.

Hindu marriage Act, 1955 – This act was passed to stop polygamy and bigamy.

National Commission for Women Act, 1990 (Act of Parliament) - Creates a National Commission for Women to review existing statutory protection of women, prepare periodic reports to the Central Government on matters relating to protections for women's rights, scrutinise grievances relating to the deprivation of these rights, and financially assist in the litigation of issues affecting women.

Constitutional (74th Amendment) Act, 1992 - Women in political power at the local level have struggled for mass literacy programs and for control over resources such as, water. Because the functioning of the office has become progressively affluent, parties only put forth a few women candidates, and these are often relatives. While these women are getting promoted, overall there are still not many women in national politics. The Amendment mandates one-third reservations or quotas for women in local governing bodies in state or public institutions.

The Protection against Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace Bill, 2010 - This bill, would create a definition of

sexual harassment within the workplace, and make it mandatory for every organization with over 10 employees to create committees, headed by women to administer sexual harassment grievances. These committees could gather evidence and would be equivalent to Civil Courts, although problematically, members do not need to have a legal background. In addition, penalties would be created for employers that include fines.

Maternity Benefits Act, 1961 – This act permits a woman to 12 weeks of leave with full pay associated with the birth of a child and there is no adoption benefit. It is unlawful for an employer to discharge or suspend a woman during or because of maternity leave. A woman worker must be permitted to take two nursing breaks, in addition to normal breaks, until her child is 15 months old.

Factories Act, 1948 - According to the act, the employer must provide child care facilities for children, below the age of six years at the workplaces, where more than 30 women workers are employed. Prosecutions against an employer for violating the Factories Act is infrequent, and supervisors seldom examine the number of women workers employed or the mandatory crèche or child care centres. In fact, on record, there is not a single case known, where an observer or a supervisor went to a worksite to check on the number of women employees. Also, employers bypass the Factories Act by employing less than 30 women or using part time and or contract labour.

Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966 - Provides for the well-being of the workers in beedi and cigar factories by regulating the conditions of work, including maximum hours and the safety of the working environment. In addition, child care facilities must be available for working mothers. This act requires the mandatory appointment of women to the advisory and central advisory committees.

The Plantation Labour Act, 1951 - Every plantation with more than fifty women workers must provide child care, including for those women workers, employed by a contractor. The plantation must also provide child care, when women employees have in aggregate more than twenty children. Women workers get breaks in between work to feed their children.

Employee's State Insurance (General) Regulation, 1950 - Maternity benefits are made available on the date a medical certificate is issued for miscarriage, pregnancy-related, sickness, bed rest, or pre-term birth.

The Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act, 1970 – Day care must be provided, where 20 or more women work on contract regularly.

Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 - The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, which is the national law against child marriage, does not allow the question of consent in case of minors and treats child marriage as a punishable offence.

6. Government Schemes and Programs to empower women :-

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao :- To eliminate female foeticide and to promote education for girl children.

STEP (Support to training cum Employment for women) – To increase the self-reliance and autonomy of women by enhancing their productivity & enabling them to take up income generation activity.

SSA (SarvaShikshaAbhiyan) – For girl child education. It lead to increase in the Gender Parity Index (GPI).

The National literacy Mission or Saakshar Bharat – Literacy of women. Literacy is the critical instrument of women's empowerment.

National Rural Health Mission – Educating women on health care. It has resulted in the decline in fertility rates, Maternal mortality rates (MMR), Infant mortality rates (IMR).

SHG (Self Help Groups) – For economic development in women by giving micro finances.

GB (Gender budgeting) – Identifying the felt needs of women and re-prioritizing and increasing expenditure to meet these needs.

NMEW (National Mission for Empowerment of Women) – To ensure economic & social empowerment of women.

Swayamsidha scheme – To ensures total development of women.

Swadhar scheme – Basic necessities to marginalised women & girls.

Kishori Shakti Yojana – Empowerment of adolescent girls.

MahilaSamridhi Yojana – For women empowerment.

Maternity Benefit Scheme – Payment of Rs.500/- to pregnant women for the first two births only if the woman belongs to BPL (Below Poverty Line) category.

RastriyaMahilaKosh – To provide micro loans for women.

Scheme for working women hostel – To promote availability of safe & conveniently located accommodation for working women.

Development of women & children in Rural Areas (DWCRA)– Creation of groups of women for income generating activities on self sustaining basis.

SABLA – Empowerment of adolescent girls.

International efforts for women empowerment :-

Year '2001' was declared as the "Women empowerment year".

'Promoting gender equality and empowering women' is one of the eight 'Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs).

7. Conclusion

The main purpose of this research paper is to acquire understanding of rights of women. The main reason, that the rights of women have been undermined is due to the existence of the patriarchal society. The decision making and other powers and authorities were vested in the hands of males. The responsibilities of the females were limited to performing of the household chores, child development and looking after the family members. In democratic countries government gives all political, social, economic and fundamental rights to women. Supreme court and High court protect their rights. Women can directly appeal in the Supreme court or High courts in course they feel violated in any area. In India there is a NGO's who is working for women and their rights. In past the social, economic and political condition of women was very poor but now women has equal rights in social, economic and political area. Through constitutional amendments government abolished many social evils in society which harms the women's directly or indirectly.

In the present existence, with the impact of modernisation and use of innovative methods, the rights of women have been acknowledged. Girls and women from all categories and backgrounds are being enrolled in educational institutions.

Women are emerging professionals such as, doctors, lawyers, teachers, educationists, managers, administrators and so forth. The girls, who belong to minority communities are getting enrolled in educational institutions, so that they learn to exercise their rights for the well-being of their parents as well

as the community. Education enables a person to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate, learn to make wise decisions, work towards the welfare of the community and exercise rights in an efficient manner.

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