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ISSUES AND CHALLENGES**

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SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES OF INDIAN WOMEN: PROTECTION UNDER INDIAN CONSTITUTION

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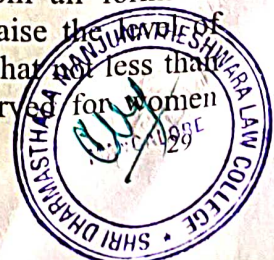
1. INTRODUCTION

Before the adoption of the Indian Constitution, Indian women suffered from various social evils like the sati system, child marriage, purdah system, devadasi system, restriction on widow remarriage, female infanticide, dowry system, domestic violence, trafficking and so on. On the one side, all these social evils were trapping women and on the other side, they were not given any chance for economic independence. The great personalities and social reformers of India such as Mahatma Gandhi, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayananda Saraswathi, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Jyoti Rao Phule and Dr. B.R Ambedkar worked hard to relieve Indian women from the clutches of all these social stigmas. After the adoption of the Constitution of India, the Indian women got empowered with social and economic rights in all walks of their life they are freed from all clutches of social stigmas.

2. PROTECTION OF WOMEN UNDER INDIAN CONSTITUTION

The Indian Constitution empowers women with freedoms, protection, fundamental rights, duties and favourable legislation. Article 14 of the Constitution guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of the law without any sort of discrimination. Women are empowered with all opportunities along with men in social, economic, political, cultural and other related fields based on equality. Art. 15 (1) prohibits discrimination and Art. 15(3) provides to make any special provisions on women. Art.16 provides for equality of opportunity for both men and women in the matter of employment under any office. Art. 39(a) direct the state to make policy for securing economic equality for women with that of men with the right to adequate means of livelihood and 39 (d) provides for equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Further, Art. 39 (e) directs the state that certain principles are to be followed about the health and strength of workers, men and women. Art. 42 directs the state to provide a just and humane condition of work and to provide maternity relief showing concern for the health and economic security of women. Poverty is the hindrance to all human developments so Art. 46 having the education and economic interest of weaker sections of society provides social justice and protection from all forms of exploitation. Article 47 showing the health concern directs the state to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of all people. Art. 243 D (2) provides that not less than one-third of the total number of seats in panchayat elections to be reserved for women

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belonging to the SC and ST women. Art. 243T (3) provides that in every Municipality seat to be reserved for women and not less than one third including seats reserved for SC and ST women out of total number seats to be filled by direct election. Further, Art. 243T (4) provides for reservation of office of Chairperson in Municipalities for women.

The Constitutional mandates on women have been continuously upheld by enacting various legislation in India to safeguard the women such as the prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971, Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987, The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 and so on. Besides several other initiatives have been taken to safeguard women such as the National Commission for Women, the National Plan of Actions for Girl Child, the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, etc.

3. CONCLUSION

Overall, with the efforts of social reformers and the adoption of the Constitution of India the Indian women have been empowered with educational, social, economic, civil, political and cultural rights. Hence, Indian women are now able to overcome all social and economic issues with the strength the Indian Constitution has provided to them.

