



Rashtra Mahila

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Editor's Column

8th March, the International Women's Day is an occasion celebrated by Women's groups around the world. Women of all continents, often divided by national boundaries and by ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic and political diversities come together to celebrate solidarity on this day. They look back to a tradition that represents decades of struggle for equality, justice, peace and development.

The International Women's Day is the story of ordinary women as makers of history; it is rooted in the centuries-old struggle of women to participate in society on an equal footing with men.

The idea of the International Women's Day first arose at the turn of the nineteenth century, which in the industrialized world was a period of expansion and turbulence, booming population growth and radical ideologies.

Since those early years, the International Women's Day has assumed a new dimension for women in developed and developing countries alike. The growing international women's movement, which has been strengthened by global United Nations Women's Conferences has helped make the commemoration a rallying point for coordinated efforts to demand women's rights and participation in the political and economic process. Increasingly, the International Women's Day, is a time to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who

have played an extraordinary role in the history of women's rights.

During the last five decades, the women's movement has become a truly global phenomenon. The "Beijing Plus Five", special session of the General Assembly, showed that while we have moved forward in some areas in implementing the recommendations of the 1995 Beijing Conference, there are many points on which we have yet to make a serious headway. However, the commitments made by Governments in Beijing reflect the understanding that women's equality must be a central component of any

Focus

INTERNATIONAL WOMENS DAY

attempt to solve the world's social economic and political problems. Thus, where once women fought to put gender equality on the international agenda, gender equality is now one of the primary factors shaping that agenda.

In many countries, provisions guaranteeing enjoyment of human rights without discrimination on the basis of sex have been included in constitutions or integrated into legislative reforms. Discriminatory legal provisions have been repealed and legal literacy and other measures introduced to alert women to their rights.

Yet, much remains to be done. More than half a century after independence, women in India still find themselves shackled. At the forefront is the impact on women of globalization, liberalization, economic

Helpline for Women in Distress

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restructuring and privatization. Poverty among women, especially, heads of households and older women appears to be deepening. Women are over-represented among the unemployed and under-employed. They still continue to pay with their lives for child marriage, domestic violence, dowry demands, foeticide, rapes and inadequate provision of health care.

On this International Women's Day, let us re-dedicate ourselves to the cause of upliftment and empowerment of women. For when women thrive, all the society benefits, and succeeding generations are given a better start in life.

Madhya Pradesh takes the lead

In a major shift from age-old tradition, more and more immovable properties are now being registered in favour of womenfolk in Madhya Pradesh. This follows a decision of the State Government to grant two percent exemption in stamp duty on registration of immovable properties in favour of women. The recent documents of the Registration Offices of Madhya Pradesh show that in majority of cases the purchasers are women.

The rural as well as urban areas are witnessing this change in the trend of registration of immovable properties in the names of women. About 25 thousand registries have been executed in favour of women and an exemption of about Rs. 12 crore has been given to them.

National Workshop on Women in Industry

To commemorate the International Women's Day celebrated each year on 8th March, the National Commission for Women organized a two-day national workshop on 'Women in Industry : Policies, Problems and Prospects', in New Delhi. This was followed by an all-India Meeting of Secretaries of Rural Development, Women & Child Development and Industry Ministry.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Guest, Hon'ble HRD Minister, Shri Arjun Singh assured all participants that he would take care to implement the recommendations of the workshop. He lauded the efforts of the National Commission for Women, the entrepreneurs, social workers and Govt. officials for taking initiatives to discuss women empowerment issues.

Addressing the workshop, Dr. Girija Vyas, Chairperson, National Commission for Women said that the recently concluded Beijing Plus 10 Conference at New York (which she attended) had again highlighted the necessity for various Governments to put in place policies with women in mind. She appealed to the participants to shift the focus of empowerment issues to the grassroot rural women. She gave the slogan "*Chalo Gaon Ki Or*". She emphasized the need to train imprisoned women in some income generation skills to help them in their rehabilitation. She emphasized on the four pillars of empowerment - which are : Govt. policies and initiatives, their implementation, the role of NGOs and political parties to create awareness and the positive role of the media. Her thrust was to give an identity to each woman and make them aware of their rights.

In her introductory address, NCW Member, Dr. Sudha Malaiya said, "though women participate in every industry and profession, yet their contribution is seldom recognised.



1. Shri Arjun Singh addressing the workshop. Sitting on the dias are Dr. Sudha Malaiya, Ms Reva Nayyar, Dr. Girija Vyas, Ms Sumitra Mahajan 2. Ms Reva Nayyar addressing the workshop. Dr. Sudha Malaiya, Ms Jaya Jaitley, Mr. Satyanand Mishra look on. 3. Chairpersons of State Commissions for Women

Even the work of a homemaker is never calculated in economic terms which is why she never gets her true place in the society.

"The mindset of society has to change and for this women have to be educated and made financially independent. Legislations are needed to help the new awakened woman entrepreneur, who needs loans and market linkages to sell her products.

This is where the state has to reach out. The loopholes in existing policies need to be plugged and laws amended."

Smt. Indu Jain, CMD, Times of India group, during her address said that women's prosperity was the cornerstone of their emancipation and with timely govt. help, they could break the glass ceiling and become self-reliant.



At the all-India meet of Secretaries, Dr. Sudha Malaiya, Dr. Girija Vyas and Member Secretary Shri N.P. Gupta (below) State Secretaries participating in the meet.

Smt. Sumitra Mahajan, M.P. spoke about her experiences as a ground level worker as well as a former Central Minister. She said that all participants should come out with their views and highlight the problems they were facing in their advancement so that the Government could do the needful. She suggested that successful entrepreneurs should come to the support of the new and small entrepreneurs, who should be provided with women-friendly tools and technology.

More than 200 women participants from all over India attended the workshop which included the Chairpersons of the State Commissions for Women, NGOs and representatives of the Ministry of Finance, SSI, HRD, Tourism and Commerce.

The first business session on Government policies was addressed by CII, women entrepreneur association and NGOs. The following points emerged :

- Post globalization is effecting women significantly.
- Gradual move to lower tariff will enhance competition and bring about drastic changes in the Small Scale Industry Sectors.
- Foreign direct investment will lead to privatization, jeopardizing job security.
- Existing policies and programmes should be reviewed and steps initiated for reforms and structural changes to sustain economic growth.
- Initiatives and new technologies to be brought in to counter market failures.

- Need for social auditing and awareness.

The next session discussed issues of women workers, women employees and women entrepreneurs both at micro and macro level covering the urban and rural areas. The other sessions discussed financial feasibilities, business opportunities, marketing dilemmas and capacity building. The last session came out with policy recommendations to be forwarded to the Government for implementation.

The next day, while addressing the state secretaries, NCW Chairperson Dr. Girija Vyas urged them to make women aware of the Govt. schemes so that they could avail of them to make themselves economically independent. Dr. Sudha Malaiya, in her welcome address, gave the gist of the deliberations that took place earlier in the two-day workshop and highlighted the recommendations that emerged therein. Member Secretary, Shri N.P. Gupta, emphasised that while discussing the problems of women in industry, the secretaries should also come up with solutions which could be easily implemented. The meeting also discussed strategies for inter-departmental coordination for convergence, strengthening existing policies, facilitating access to finance, providing institutional market support and capacity building.

Some of the suggestions that emerged after deliberations were : (a) a national database of women entrepreneurs should be prepared (b) women should be made aware of Govt. schemes for them (c) Agro based products and products prepared by the Adivasis should be given marketing facilities (d) Women Development Corporation should be constituted in each state (e) NCW should prepare a booklet on successful women entrepreneurs and on Govt. schemes which provide maximum profit to women entrepreneurs.

IMPORTANT DECISION

Only legal wife entitled to maintenance:SC

In an important order relating to matrimonial law, the Supreme Court has ruled that only the legally wedded wife and not the woman who is treated like one is entitled to get maintenance from the husband.

“The court said even if a man treats a woman as wife, it is really inconsequential as it is the intention of the legislature (in framing the law) which is relevant and not the attitude of the party”.

Crimes against Women

According to the figures compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau, every hour, 25 violent crimes take place in the country while 59 housewives commit suicide every day and one accidental death occurs every minute across the country.

The violent crimes include two rapes, four murders, ten culpable homicides and one dowry death on an hourly basis.

As far as other heinous crimes are concerned, 17 crimes are committed against a woman every hour, 3 kidnappings and abductions and 5 crimes are carried out against a Scheduled Caste/Tribe person hourly.

As for crimes against women, Chhattisgarh reported 38.4 percent of

Maharashtra's gesture towards women

In a humanitarian gesture, the Maharashtra government has decided to free all women above 60 years of age, who are lodged in various state jails. The only condition is that they should be facing life imprisonment and should have already served three years in jail. They should also not be convicts under TADA or the Maharashtra prevention of dangerous activities.

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Members' Visits

- Sponsored by NCW, Member Nirmala Sitharaman attended public hearings on fisherwomen of Gujarat at Chorwad, Jamnagar, Jakkau and Mandvi respectively. She also attended a public hearing on women workers in salt pans at Jogninar in Kuchchh district.

Later, Ms Sitharaman visited the fishing settlement at Rupenbander, in Jamnagar district, where she felt the living conditions needed urgent attention. She also visited several salt pans in Kuchchh district near Surajbhari bridge and met the salt pan workers near Samakyani Pul in the Rajkot district area.

She inspected the Guru Govind Singh Hospital and the district jail at Jamnagar. She ascertained the condition of undertrial women prisoners there.

- Member Nafisa Hussain attended as Chief Guest programmes organised by the West Delhi Police in New Delhi, Brotherhood society at Ghaziabad and Slum Children development Trust in New Delhi to commemorate the International Women's Day. She explained the functions of NCW and made women aware of laws meant for their benefit.

She also attended a workshop organised by Mewat Developing Agency at Faridabad. She exhorted women to treat girls and boys equally and urged women to become economically independent to overcome their backwardness.



Member Nafisa Hussain addressing women participants

a total of 146,678 cases registered nationwide.

Among the 35-mega cities, Delhi accounted for 24 percent (320 out of 1,312) rape and 34 percent (759 of the 2,251) of kidnappings and abduction of women.

Allocation for Paternity Cases in Orissa Budget

The Orissa Budget has something in it for women, particularly unwed

mothers. Faced with complaints that poor girls betrayed in love ended up becoming unwed mothers, the budget sanctioned Rs. 5 lakh to bear the expenses of DNA testing to nail down the culprits.

For further information visit our website at :

www.ncw.nic.in