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## **CHALLENGES IN ACCESSING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTHCARE: A CASE STUDY ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN MANUAL SCAVENGING COMMUNITIES IN CHENNAI**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*"Manual scavenging" refers to a highly marginalized occupation that involves the manual cleaning of human waste, which is a hazardous and degrading practice. Women in manual scavenging communities face multiple layers of discrimination and violation of their basic human rights. They are subjected to social exclusion, marginalization, and derogatory stereotypes. It creates significant challenges for women in exercising their reproductive health rights, it includes limited access to reproductive healthcare services, lack of awareness about reproductive health issues, stigma, discrimination, and cultural constraints that restrict women's ability to make informed choices about their reproductive well-being. These challenges can impact women's overall health, well-being, and agency in decision-making related to their reproductive lives. Factors such as lack of awareness, financial constraints, cultural norms, and inadequate healthcare infrastructure contribute to limited access to reproductive healthcare for women belonging to marginalized communities. This study aims to examine the specific challenges faced by women in these communities regarding the access to reproductive healthcare and shed light on the imperative of recognizing and promoting reproductive health as a human right for these women. For this study, the researcher employed a sample of 10 case studies with women in manual scavenging communities to explore their experiences and perspectives regarding reproductive healthcare. Through the case study method, the researcher will be able to identify recurring patterns, barriers, and potential*

*solutions. The findings of this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by women in manual scavenging communities when accessing reproductive healthcare. This study aims to draw interventions such as targeting awareness campaigns and, proposes strategies for promoting and protecting women's reproductive health.*

***Keywords: Manual Scavenging, Women, Health and Safety, Human rights Marginalization, Discrimination, Reproductive Healthcare.***

## **INTRODUCTION**

Manual scavenging, a practice entailing the manual cleaning of human waste and other hazardous materials, disproportionately affects marginalized communities, particularly women. In the prevailing social hierarchy, manual scavengers are positioned at the very bottom and are even regarded as the most marginalized among those who are already marginalized. Women make up around 95% of manual scavengers, facing not only the denial of fundamental rights but also encountering numerous difficulties across all aspects of life. This is due to a socio-economic structure that is built on caste-based discrimination, patriarchal norms, and exclusion, effectively pushing them to the fringes of society.

### **What is Manual Scavenging?**

Manual scavenging, a practice rooted in caste-based compulsion, has persisted across various regions of India. This occupation involves the manual cleaning of human and animal waste using basic tools like brooms and small tin plates. The waste is then collected in baskets and transported to designated disposal sites situated at a considerable distance from inhabited areas.

### **Reasons for Women Involved in Manual Scavenging**

Women are more prone to vulnerability when it comes to manual scavenging due to the combination of social, economic, and cultural factors such as caste-based discrimination, social stigma, limited opportunities, and limited access to education and awareness, Women who

work as manual scavengers often feel compelled to continue because their families and communities have very limited ways to earn money. These families are usually very poor and come from marginalized groups in India. In these communities, even having enough food to eat is a big problem. While men from these communities might find occasional work as laborers, their income is not steady or dependable. Women are more vulnerable to manual scavenging due to a combination of social, economic, cultural, and health factors exacerbating their precarious position in this occupation.

### **HEALTH RISKS OF WOMEN ENGAGED IN MANUAL SCAVENGING**

Women engaged in manual scavenging face severe health risks due to the nature of their work, which involves cleaning and handling human waste, sewage, and other hazardous materials. Manual scavenging is a degrading and hazardous occupation, and despite being banned in many countries, it continues to persist in some regions. Here are some of the health risks faced by women manual scavengers:

- **Exposure to Pathogens:** Manual scavengers are at high risk of exposure to various pathogens present in human waste, including bacteria, viruses, and parasites. This can lead to a range of infectious diseases, including gastrointestinal infections, skin diseases, and respiratory infections.
- **Respiratory Problems:** Inhaling toxic fumes and gases from sewers and septic tanks can cause severe respiratory problems. Exposure to hydrogen sulphide and methane gases can be particularly dangerous, leading to dizziness, nausea, and even suffocation.
- **Skin Conditions:** Direct contact with human waste and sewage can lead to skin conditions such as dermatitis, rashes, and fungal infections. The chemicals and toxins present in sewage can irritate and damage the skin.

- **Eye and Vision Problems:** Contact with harmful substances can cause eye irritation and damage. Inadequate protection can result in eye infections, conjunctivitis, and, in extreme cases, vision impairment.
- **Gastrointestinal Disorders:** Handling human waste without proper protective measures can lead to the ingestion of harmful pathogens, which can cause gastrointestinal disorders, including diarrhea, vomiting, and stomach cramps.
- **Injuries:** Manual scavengers often work in unsafe and unsanitary conditions. They can be at risk of injuries from sharp objects, broken glass, and other hazardous materials present in sewage and waste. These injuries can lead to infections and long-term health complications.
- **Mental Health Issues:** Manual scavengers often face social stigma, discrimination, and psychological stress due to the degrading nature of their work. This can result in mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem.
- **Reproductive Health Concerns:** Female manual scavengers may experience reproductive health problems due to exposure to hazardous substances. This can include complications during pregnancy and birth, as well as an increased risk of infertility.
- **Malnutrition:** In many cases, manual scavengers belong to marginalized and impoverished communities. Their low income and lack of access to proper nutrition can contribute to malnutrition and overall poor health.
- **Lack of Access to Healthcare:** Manual scavengers often face barriers in accessing healthcare services, including discrimination by healthcare providers. This can delay treatment for health issues and exacerbate their conditions.

## **REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AS A HUMAN RIGHT**

Reproductive health is considered a fundamental human right because it encompasses several essential components of well-being and autonomy, and its fulfillment is critical for individuals to lead healthy, fulfilling lives. Here are key reasons why reproductive health is recognized as a human right:

Reproductive health is inherently tied to human dignity. It acknowledges that every individual has the right to make decisions about their own body and life choices, free from coercion, discrimination, and violence. It recognizes an individual's right to make informed and autonomous decisions about their reproductive and sexual health. This includes choices related to contraception, family planning, pregnancy, childbirth, and abortion, among others. Access to comprehensive reproductive healthcare, including family planning services, prenatal care, safe childbirth, and treatment for reproductive health issues, is vital for the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of individuals.

Reproductive rights are closely linked to gender equality. Ensuring that individuals, regardless of gender, have equal access to reproductive health services helps address and rectify gender-based discrimination and disparities in healthcare. Access to reproductive healthcare, including safe childbirth and postnatal care, is essential for reducing maternal mortality rates. High maternal mortality rates are often indicative of inadequate access to reproductive health services. Reproductive health services, including contraception, play a significant role in preventing unintended pregnancies. This, in turn, helps individuals and families make informed choices about their family size and spacing of children. Recognizing reproductive health as a human right helps protect individuals from harmful practices such as forced sterilization, female genital mutilation, child marriage, and gender-based violence. Reproductive health encompasses sexual health, promoting healthy, respectful, and consensual sexual relationships. This includes education and information about sexual health and relationships. Having access to reproductive healthcare can greatly improve an individual's overall quality of life. Healthy reproductive choices and healthcare contribute to healthier families and communities.

Reproductive rights are enshrined in various international agreements and declarations, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), among others. Many countries have recognized reproductive rights through domestic legislation and constitutional protections. These legal frameworks often aim to safeguard individuals' rights to make reproductive choices free from discrimination and coercion. Thus, recognizing reproductive health as a human right is essential for upholding individual autonomy, gender equality, and overall well-being. It ensures that individuals have the information, services, and support necessary to make informed decisions about their reproductive and sexual health, free from discrimination and coercion. Additionally, it acknowledges the interconnectedness of reproductive rights with broader human rights principles, such as the right to life, liberty, and security of person, and the right to non-discrimination.

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study aims to examine the specific challenges faced by women in these communities regarding the access to reproductive healthcare and shed light on the imperative of recognizing and promoting reproductive health as a human right for these women. The researcher employed a sample of 10 case studies with women in manual scavenging communities to explore their experiences and perspectives regarding reproductive healthcare. Through the case study method, the researcher will be able to identify recurring patterns, barriers, and potential solutions. The findings of this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges women in manual scavenging communities face when accessing reproductive healthcare. This study aims to draw interventions such as targeting awareness campaigns and, proposes strategies for promoting and protecting women's reproductive health.

## **CASE STUDIES**

**Case study 1:** Name: Urvashi (Original name changed)



Urvashi is a 30-year-old woman with two children, when she was pregnant with her first child, she had limited access to information regarding family planning and maternal health services. She also faced numerous challenges during the delivery such as distance and transportation, financial barriers etc.

**Case Study – 2:** Name: Jothy (Original name changed)

Jothy is a 38-year-old woman with four children. When asked about accessing reproductive healthcare or even the knowledge about it seems to be very unaware that reproductive rights are basic. She also tells that she didn't have control over my body or even to have kids for that matter, it was her husband's decision to have these many kids.

**Case Study – 3:** Name: Lakshmi (Original name changed)

Lakshmi is a 30-year-old woman who is the only working member of my family, her husband passed away after two years of marriage. She did face a lot of struggles during the birth of her two children like no proper infrastructure at the hospital and no support in financial aspects. Now after my husband's departure, she had to feed my children and she cannot see them starving. she made a choice to take up this job after my husband's departure.

**Case Study – 4:** Name: Rasathi (Original name changed)

Rasathi is a 37-year-old woman who says "I took the difficult step of separating from my husband due to ongoing domestic violence and abuse, I would also be denied reproductive healthcare access and also was judged when I had to undergo an abortion due to financial reasons. I worked as a manual scavenger, involved in tasks like garbage disposal and sweeping. Despite the challenges, I'm proud to have raised a daughter and a son who are now also contributing to the family's support through their own work.

**Case Study – 5:** Name: Chinna Ponnu (Original name changed)

Chinna Ponnu is a 60-year-old woman who says: I've faced the loss of everyone dear to me, leaving me on my own. With determination, I managed to arrange marriages for my two

daughters, who are now happily settled in Andhra. For three decades, I toiled as a manual scavenger under government employment, earning around Rs.1000/- on a monthly basis. I extended my hours of work, striving to save for my family's needs. Following the successful settlement of my daughters, I made the decision to retire from my job. Now, it's heartwarming to share that my daughters support me by sending me money, as they ensure my well-being.”

**Case Study – 6:** Name: Nayomi (Original name changed)

Nayomi is a 30-year-old woman who is originally from Chennai, she spent a part of her life in Andhra after getting married. However, her husband and she eventually moved back to Chennai in search of employment opportunities. She says “Following in the footsteps of my mother, I also took up a job as a manual scavenger. Together, my husband and I work diligently to provide for our family's needs. We're blessed with three children who are currently pursuing their education in high school. I aspire to provide them with better opportunities, steering them away from the same job path I've taken. Education is our priority, ensuring they have a brighter future ahead.” Nayomi also revealed that she had faced discrimination based on the locality where she belongs, while accessing reproductive healthcare.

**Case Study – 7:** Name: Divya (Original name changed)

Divya is a 25-year-old woman whose both of her parents have been engaged in the challenging occupation of manual scavenging. My father was tasked with cleaning septic tanks and sewage systems, but a few years ago, he was diagnosed with kidney disease. Presently, he relies on dialysis treatments to manage his condition. She also says: The difficulties my family has faced due to these circumstances have had a significant impact on our lives”

**Case Study – 8:** Name: Josephine (Original name changed)

Josephine is a 50-year-old woman who started the journey as a manual scavenger and through hard work and dedication, she rose to the position of a supervisor. Over a span of 36 years, she says “I committed myself to this field, overcoming numerous challenges along the way. Despite my long service, I have not received any government assistance or support. As I

approach retirement next year, I also face the burden of a severe lung problem caused by cleaning septic tanks. I am grateful that my two children are now working and actively providing for the family. But she did not have the awareness that reproductive health care access is a basic human right or it's her body and her decision to have or not have kids.

**Case Study – 9:** Name: Janaki (Original name changed)

Janaki is a 32-year-old woman whose husband was employed as a manual scavenger, responsible for cleaning septic tanks and dealing with blockages. Tragically, he lost his life while performing this hazardous job. It's important to note that he had a habit of consuming alcohol while working, which likely contributed to the unfortunate incident. Following his untimely passing, the responsibility of supporting the family fell upon Janaki. Despite having limited options, she found herself compelled to step into the same line of work as my late husband. My primary motivation was to ensure the well-being and future of her son, as she navigated this challenging path. She has also said she was not treated properly during her delivery and even for postnatal care. She also discloses that she has also faced discrimination.

**Case Study – 10:** Name: Rajeshwari (Original name changed)

Rajaeshwari is a 30-year-old female who got married at the age of 16, and now has four children. Unfortunately, her husband lost his leg in an accident, which has left him unable to work for the past five years. As a result, she has taken on the sole responsibility of providing for our family. She continues to do this work for her children's well-being, it drives her to work tirelessly in order to support the family. But most of the time they are not been provided with safety gear for protection, and due to that she has an aversion towards food, most of the time she doesn't even feel like eating, she also has a few injuries while cleaning. It's a challenging journey, but I'm dedicated to ensuring a better future for my family.

## **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

### **Limited Access to Reproductive Healthcare:**

- Women in manual scavenging communities face significant barriers to accessing reproductive healthcare services.
- Lack of awareness about available services and their rights regarding healthcare.
- Economic constraints often prevent them from seeking timely and adequate care.

### **Stigmatization and Discrimination:**

- Manual scavenging communities often face social stigma and discrimination, leading to reluctance to seek healthcare.
- Discrimination by healthcare providers can result in poor quality of care and neglect of women's health needs.

### **Health Risks and Poor Sanitation:**

- Exposure to hazardous waste materials and unsanitary work environments poses health risks to women in manual scavenging.
- Lack of access to clean water and sanitation facilities further exacerbates health issues.

### **Maternal Health Challenges:**

- Higher rates of maternal mortality and morbidity among women in manual scavenging communities due to inadequate prenatal and postnatal care.

- Limited access to skilled birth attendants and emergency obstetric care services.

## **SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION**

**Role as an Educator:** The social worker should play the role of educator and create the need for Awareness and Education, Initiatives are required to raise awareness among women in manual scavenging communities about their reproductive health rights and available healthcare services. Education programs should be implemented to empower women with information and knowledge about hygiene and sanitation practices.

**Role as a catalyst:** Addressing Social Stigma and Discrimination: Community-based awareness campaigns and sensitization programs for healthcare providers to reduce social stigma and discrimination against these communities. Ensuring a non-judgmental and inclusive healthcare environment.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Investment in improving sanitation facilities and clean water access within these communities to reduce health risks. Providing safe working conditions and alternatives to manual scavenging to protect women's health are the further recommendations given in this study. Accessible Healthcare Services, Expanding the reach of reproductive healthcare services to these communities through mobile clinics or outreach programs. Ensuring affordable and accessible maternal healthcare services, including skilled birth attendants and emergency care.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, addressing the challenges in accessing reproductive healthcare for women in manual scavenging communities in Chennai is a complex and multifaceted task. It requires a concerted effort from the government, healthcare providers, NGOs, and the community itself. By working together and implementing these recommendations, we can

strive towards a more equitable and just healthcare system that upholds the rights and dignity of all women, regardless of their background or circumstances.

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**CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS FOR EQUALITY OF WOMEN:  
EDUCATION AND LEGAL PROVISIONS**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Gender equality is one of the main aspects in self-reported happiness and well-being in the international world. Gender equality term denotes to the equal opportunities, responsibilities and rights of both feminine and masculine genders. Recognizing the urgent need, gender equality is most significant part of the Indian Constitution for every citizen. The fundamental code and principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Preamble of the Constitution which is reinforced by the Fundamental Duties, Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles. Through the instrument of the Constitution women are empowered by the various states through the measures of positive discrimination for the well-being of women. The present paper focuses on the constitutional provisions made for the development and better treatment of women in every aspect of life. This study is done on the basis of secondary sources of data.*

**Keywords:** *Gender, Constitution, Equality, women, Rights.*

**INTRODUCTION**

The term “Gender equality” refers to the equal right; opportunities and responsibilities of men and women and boys and girls. Gender equality does not indicate that women and men will be equal or become equal, but moderately gender's human rights, duties, obligations, opportunities and commitments will be self-determining of the other's gender rights at birth.

Equality of the gender implies that the interest, needs and priorities of both men and women are taken into account recognizing the diversities of different groups of people. Given the necessity, the Indian Constitution places a high priority on the equality of gender. The Indian constitution and its Preamble, Fundamental Duties, Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of state policy do preserve the equality of the gender. The states are asked to take measures to preserve and enshrine constructive and positive discrimination in favour of the well-being of girls and women in India. This article highlights the real position and condition of women before and after the Independence, and portrays the actual legal, real situation of women during the Vedic era, Post Vedic period and also medial era.

### **WOMEN AT VEDIC PERIOD**

The real situation and position of feminine gender during the Vedic era was wonderful and glorious on account of equality and freedom of expression. Women participated in every aspect of life and seemed to have enjoyed a comparatively higher status in comparison with the later period of time in the history. The great women who were the frontrunners in the society are Apala, Yamini, Gargi, Visvara and Ghosastole. In Vedic period, there even some of the female scholars were also mentioned such as Gargi and Maitreyi, who took part in intellectual and philosophical debates.

Sati, Child Marriages and co-education of the girls and boys were the rule of the time. Women were allowed to perform sacrifices individually and independently and the impediments were not regarded and considered in most of the ritual and practices. Though the purdah system was absent yet the dowry and polygamy systems and practices were prevalent during this era particularly among the ruling elite societies. Remarriages of widows were permitted and no prejudices and discriminations of bias against boys and girls were absent. There was absence of the purdah system. However, the system of polygamy and dowry was only prevalent in the ruling elites. There was no prohibition in the remarriage of widow and prejudice against boys and girls were present.



## **POSITION OF WOMEN AT POST-VEDIC PERIOD**

During this period, the girls and women obligated to endure severe adversities and limitations as propounded by Manu. By elevating the status of men, he sought to establish a society dominated by men. The family's reaction to the birth of a girl kid was one of calamity. Girls were kept at distance from getting education. During this period, pre-puberty marriage system became more common and widowhood was sometimes seen as a social stigma. The development of stringent caste hierarchies and the publication of Dharmashastra scriptures emphasized more restrictive social roles for women. The ruling class girls were permitted to get educational schooling, training in military service and science, fine arts and administration to some level. During this Vedic Period, the idea of “stridhan” prevailed and the right to property for women was accepted and recognized.

## **WOMEN’S POSITION DURING THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD**

During the medieval period women were degraded and this era was marked by the foreign invasions of India by the Hunts and Alesxander, the influences of Islamic practices and the cultural paradigm. The security threats and adversities were caused by the invading soldiers in all areas of the country as a result, women were afraid of coming out and placed behind the walls and veils. Women and girls were not given the chances of getting education and their community participation as well as individual participation in the community gatherings and affairs were not allowed. Society witnessed many social evils such as sati, child marriages and female infanticide during this period while social curses such as Devadasi, dowry systems, and polygamy kept women under pressure and constant unrest in their life.

## **BRITISH ERA AND WOMEN SITUATION**

Notably, during the British era, the situation and position of women and girls had shifts and changes because of the westernization of the socio-cultural aspects of the Indian society. The various notions such as liberty, individual secularism and equality came up during this period and yet they were restricted to the ruling classes only. British introduced modern education system that provided limited opportunities for girls to access formal education, albeit

in smaller numbers compared to boys. On the contrary, the British administration often displayed a lack of understanding of local customs and traditions, leading to policies that were insensitive to the complexities of Indian society. So, British colonialism impact on women's lives was complex and multifaceted.

During the British regime, two major movements attracted the attention of everyone in the society. They are Social Reform Movement and Nationalist Movement.

### **SOCIAL REFORMS MOVEMENT**

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, social reforms movement emerged and dealt with the issue of women equal status in the society. Many social reformers were concerned about the social problems and challenges including prohibition of re marriage, sati, child marriage, refusal to give right to property to women and denial of right to education for girls and women in the Indian culture and society. M.K. Gandhi, the father of the nation powerfully criticized many social evil systems of sati, Devadasi system, child marriages and preventing the remarriage of widows.

### **NATIONALIST MOVEMENT**

The movement of the nationalist attracted and got the attention of the society to impart and to instill confidence, respect and sense of security among the women to create the awareness against the oppressive culture and raise their voice against social evils degrading them. All India Women's Conference took place in 1972 and it was most significant for proving to moving the society to give right to equality and respect to women at large. The social reformers intended to fight against societal evils and ills, paved the ways to bring forth various laws such as Child Marriage Act, Widow's Remarriage Act and the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act.

## **EQUALITY OF WOMEN IN THE INDIAN CONSTITUTIONS**

The Constitutions of India in 1950 made several provisions targeting at the equality for women and fighting and raising voices against gender-based discriminations. It provides several provisions for the development, growth, empowerment and treatment of every female gender in all aspects of life in the country. The preamble is the fundamental and vital to the Indian Constitution which does not create or discriminate women from men but always maintain equal treatment for both genders. The suppression and oppression of women in the Indian history is a old concept. This notion of suppression gradually was given up and it paved the way for the upliftment and provision of equal status for women. Despite the fact that it does not explicitly address gender equality, it does lay the foundation for "the equality of status and opportunity" to all citizens, including women.

## **FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS IN INDIA**

The third part of the constitution highlights the fundamental rights and the articles 12 to 35 ensures the fundamental rights of all citizens without any bias of sex. Though the rights protect both genders of Indian society, yet certain sections of the provisions likely protect the women. For example:

- ❖ **Article 15 (1)** safeguards prohibition of discrimination on various grounds including sex.
- ❖ **Article 15 (2)** forbids gender-based discrimination in public places and establishments such as hotels, stores, restaurants, theaters and other entertainment areas.
- ❖ **Article 15 (3)** presents the prevention of discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sex, caste or place of birth and should not prevent the various states from creating and making special provisions for children and women.
- ❖ **Article 16** guarantees equality of opportunities in all matters of general public employment and prevents discrimination on the basis of sex or sexual orientation.

It is to be understood and noted that constitutional provisions ensure all the right to women and girls which are specifically provided for them. The list of fundamental rights provided the constitution are: Right to equality, Right to equality, Right to Freedom, Right against Exploitation, Right to freedom of Religion, Cultural and Educational Rights, Right to constitutional remedies.

### **DIRECTIVE PRINCIPLES OF STATE POLICY AND WOMEN**

The directive principles of State Policy in the Indian constitution, reflects the governance of India as a country and ensures that it is a democratic and welfare state. This policy demands for the equal employment rights, adequate means of respectable and dignified livelihood, equal compensation for work for both genders in and democratic manner.

**Article 39 (a)** describes that the state needs to direct its policy and welfares towards all securing equal right to adequate means of livelihood and life style in all economic matters emphasizing the principle of gender equality in all aspects of life.

**Article 39 (d)** states that there should be equal payment for equal labour for both women and men.

**Article 39 (e)** of the constitution presents that strength of workers and the health of the workers that is women and men as well as that of their children of underage needed to be equally safeguarded.

**Article 42** of the directive principles of state policy directs all States to establish policies that offer fair as well as compassionating better working conditions of work and maternity relief measures for women at all times.

**Article 44** urges that the government must work to ensure that every Indian citizen has access to a civil code that is consistent across the country. But women still experience inequalities and injustice.

## **LEGAL PROVISIONS**

To maintain the constitutional mandate, the state have had passed a various legislative policies and measures meant to guarantee equal rights, combat social discriminating evils of the society, different forms of atrocities and violence as well as to offer support services, particularly to working women. Although women can become victims of any crime, including murder, robbery, and infidelity, etc. Crimes against women are those that are committed especially with the intention of harming a woman.

Two broad categories of legal provisions are:

### **1) The crimes identified under the Indian Penal Code (IPC)**

- a) Rape (Section 376 IPC)
- b) Kidnapping & Abduction for different purposes (Section 363-373)
- c) Homicide for Dowry, Dowry deaths or their attempts (section 302/304-B IPC)
- d) Torture, both mental and physical (Section 498- A IPC)
- e) Molestation (Section 354 IPC)
- f) Import of girls (up-to 21 years of age)

### **2) The crimes identified under the Special Laws (SLL)**

The government of independent India adopted a number of legislative measures to safeguard the interests of women. Some of the acts such as Insurance Act, Labour Act, Immoral Traffic Act, and other acts which are making special provisions for protection and upholding their interests are presented below:

- a) **The Employees State Insurance Act, 1948:** The purpose of this Act is to ensure financial assistance in instances of sickness, pregnancy, and disability as well as to provide medical services to workers at factories and other institutions.

**Maternity Benefits:** -The Act outlines regular compensation to insured women in the event of childbirth, a miscarriage, or a connected illness. Section 46 of the Act allows employees covered by it to request maternity benefits worth up to 70% of their income. Additionally, companies are not allowed to fire, suspend, or otherwise penalise an employee while they are receiving maternity benefits (Section 70).

b) **The Plantation Labour Act, 1951:** This act dealing with the aim of facilitating and providing the welfare of plantation, labour welfare measure along with the regulations to regulate the conditions of work in work places.

c) **The Immoral Traffic of Women and Girls (Prevention) Act, 1956** passed in the parliament and exclusively focuses on women and girl children. The immoral activity of prostitution or sex work is not only limited to the female gender as well as children but also the male gender is also covered under this act.

d) **Maternity Benefit Act, 1961** deals with job opportunities and employment of women in institutions/establishments for a particular period of time for the benefits of maternity and child birth giving benefits to both.

e) **The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961:** It affirms that the receiving of dowry is an unlawful act and illegal activity during the marriage and thereby prevents the exploitation and selling of women and girls.

f) The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971

g) Equal Remuneration Act, 1976

h) The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1976

i) The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1983

j) Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987

k) The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

l) Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006

## **SPECIAL INITIATIVES**

Some special initiatives for women are worth mentioning such as National Commission for Women (1992), Reservation for Women in Local-Self Government in (1992), The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000) and National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001). All these initiatives taken by the Indian government and state governments are aimed at safeguarding the legal and constitutional provisions and rights, to regulate the rules and obligations for both genders to protect the women in the elected offices of urban and rural areas, for the development and growth of the girls' children and for their future survival and protection and they were also intended to bring up empowerment and advancement of female gender.

## **CONCLUSION**

Women have contributed in many fields, yet they have nonetheless experienced prejudice on a variety of reasons. The policy makers of the constitution were responsible and sensitive to the issues and challenges confronted by women and provided special provisions for their safety, empowerment and betterment in the future. These constitutional provisions collectively aim to ensure gender equality, empower women, and eliminate discrimination based on gender. While these provisions establish the legal framework, their effective implementation requires concerted efforts from the government, society, and various stakeholders. Over the years, the interpretation of these provisions by the judicial systems which have been playing a significant role in shaping gender justice, gender equality, and equal payment and employment for all times to come in India.

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## **RIGHTS OF TRANSGENDERS: AMBIGUITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN ENSURING THEIR HUMAN DIGNITY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This research study examines the historical treatment, legal frameworks, and issues of India's transgender community. The study emphasises the need to discuss transgender rights because they are entitled to basic human rights such as life, safety, and freedom from discrimination. The paper's objectives include a literature analysis, an examination of legal frameworks, and understanding ways to promote human dignity among transgender people. Although recent legal achievements have recognised the rights of transgender individuals as a third gender, transgender people in India have historically been subjected to marginalisation and exclusion. The purpose of this qualitative research is to investigate the intricate relationship between legal frameworks, social realities, and the lived experiences of transgender people as they strive to achieve human dignity and social inclusion from their perspective.*

*Method AND Results: The methodology consisted of doing a qualitative content analysis, which involved reading academic literature, policy documents, and news pieces which were related to transgender rights in India. In order to have a better understanding of the interdependence of transgender rights and human dignity, key themes were identified and analyses were performed. Following the completion of the investigation, it was discovered that transgender people continue to suffer a variety of obstacles, such as social marginalisation, discrimination, and restricted access to healthcare, education, and career opportunities. Legislative frameworks such as the NALSA judgement and the Transgender Persons Act are examples of progress; yet, there are still implementation gaps and societal stigmas that create obstacles. In order to preserve human dignity, it is necessary to handle these*

*difficulties in a variety of different areas, such as housing, healthcare, employment, legal recognition, and marriage. Conclusion: As a conclusion: In order to guarantee human dignity for transgender people in India, it is necessary to take a multifaceted approach that includes the following: (1) awareness campaigns to combat societal stigma; (2) sensitising healthcare professionals and educators; (3) facilitating access to employment opportunities; (4) strengthening legal recognition and protections; and (5) promoting family environments that are inclusive. To create sustainable progress towards a society that is equal and dignified for everyone, it is essential for communities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the government to work together.*

**Keywords:** *Transgender rights, historical context, legal frameworks, discrimination, societal challenges, human dignity.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Some sects of people are born different, some having different sexual orientations, they are inclined differently naturally. They are the marginalized section of our society; suffer a lot of discrimination and abuse and many times it is forgotten that they are part of humankind. Transgender people have gender identities that differ from their attributed sex at birth. They are either born male or female, but they feel opposite to their body structure. They are so strong in the connection to the gender not assigned to them than their birth sex, that they risk it all to be disconnected culturally and socially. The term 'transgender' comprises individuals whose gender identity, expression, or conduct deviates from the conventional expectations associated with their biological sex. There are numerous classifications of transgender identities, including transgender male, transgender female, male-to-female, and female-to-male. (Gardner and Mishra, 2022).

## **IMPORTANCE OF DISCUSSING THE RIGHTS OF TRANSGENDERS**

Discussing the rights of transgender individuals is of paramount significance for several reasons. Transgenders, like all people, are entitled to fundamental human rights. These rights consist of the right to life, safety, and freedom from discrimination, abuse, and arbitrary arrest. Transgenders have historically faced discrimination and marginalization in numerous aspects

of existence, together with employment, housing, healthcare, and education. Discussing their rights is vital to promoting equality and challenging discrimination based on gender identity or expression. Laws and policies directly affect the lives of transgenders. Advocating for and discussing their rights can lead to developing and implementing legal protections that safeguard their rights in areas such as employment, healthcare, education, and housing. Discussing their rights is not just a matter of human rights and equality but also a way to foster a more inclusive, empathetic, and understanding society that honours and respects its individuals' rights and dignity, irrespective of gender identity or appearance.

### **PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS PAPER**

The following are the objectives of this short research paper:

- 1) To conduct a literature review to explore and understand the historical overview of the issues related to the Transgender community.
- 2) To explore the legal frameworks that support the well-being of the transgenders in India.
- 3) To study the various avenues to foster Human Dignity among transgenders.

### **A BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE CURRENT SITUATION AND CHALLENGES FACED BY TRANSGENDERS**

While transgender people have been officially accepted as the third gender in India, and certain rights and protections have been granted to them, there are still issues with the implementation of these laws and the full realization of their rights.

#### **Challenges regarding the Transgender Identity**

Babbar (2016) studied the socio-legal exploitation of Transgenders in India. The researcher enumerates the social exclusion faced by the transgender community and how they are discriminated against by the Law. Due to the social exclusion imposed on them, they have

organised themselves as a separate group in society with their own legal system. Through the Guru-Chela system, divided into seven primary gharanas (clans), the Hijras have self-governed into a cultural and social sphere. They also have their internal legal system, known as Jamaats, where senior hijras mediate conflicts among themselves and serve as judges. Ghosh (2021) studied the lifestyle of the transgender community living in a dargah situated in Narayanpura, North India. It is a holy place where devotees, both Hindus and Muslims, flock in large numbers for worship and seek the blessings of the transgenders who perform various rituals. The researcher conducted this research by interviewing the transgenders and the other people connected to them in that holy place such as non-hijra insiders, local shopkeepers, and devotees. The findings elaborate on the respect and honour that this transgender community (hijras) earn from the people through the various rituals they perform for the devotees seeking blessings and various graces from that holy shrine. This hijra community has also been involved in various charity works which have earned the respect of the people in that locality. While many transgenders are forced to live a marginalised life, here is a community that lives in the mainstream society due to the religious and cultural traditions attached to their history.

### **Sociological Challenges faced by the Transgenders**

Sharma and Mishra (2020) studied the numerous trials confronted by Transgenders in India through a theoretical method and enumerated the various forms of discrimination faced by them and one of them being discrimination in the workplace. Transgender people may have trouble managing a conventional occupation because of gender norms that limit the roles that are seen as mandatory for them. Transgender workers may have to deal with teasing or abuse from their coworkers, which can have an emotional impact on them. Employers sometimes pull job offers and chances because of discrimination against workers of different genders.

### **Health Issues of the Transgenders**

Pandya and Redcay (2020) published a review article analysing the unique health requirements and hindrances to accessing healthcare amenities related to transgenders in India. The review highlights the various discriminations faced by transgenders and throws light on

poor physical and mental health issues faced by them. They have difficulty receiving appropriate medical facilities that address both general health needs and gender-specific needs. Various barriers prevent them from accessing healthcare facilities: low health literacy, discrimination at healthcare centres, absence of health insurance, being shut out of welfare projects, and other system defects. The researchers recommend that research and programming take a rights-based stance that would address the barriers faced by transgenders to healthcare services. Bhattacharya and Ghosh (2020) attempted to study the physical and mental health conditions of the hijra, Kothi, and transgenders in Kolkata. In contrast to their physical well-being (mean = 49.0), the results indicated that they had inadequate mental well-being (mean = 42.3). The results indicated the crucial necessity to include both physical and mental well-being by giving them an awareness of their healthcare rights and further all the barriers to health programmes should be removed by intervention from the government.

### **Educational Status of the Transgenders and the Challenges faced at the Educational Institutions**

Chandra (2017) conducted a study in Uttar Pradesh to explore the attitude of trainee teachers in relation to transgenders, and the study's findings were as follows: i) There was substantial variation in trainee instructors' attitudes towards transgenders based on their gender. ii) There was a substantial variation in trainee instructors' attitudes towards transgender people based on their educational qualifications. Balu (2020) studied the problems connected to the education of Transgenders in India and enumerated the various reasons that hinder their access to education. There are several causes why transgender students drop out of school or college. The absence of an inclusive language and attitude in educational institutions makes them feel out of place and unwelcomed. Added to this, incidents of abuse and discrimination from the teachers and the students lead them to isolation from the rest of the crowd. This is especially true for effeminate boys whom teachers accuse of violating social conventions at schools. As a result, they quit their education and eventually limit their career opportunities. Das (2019) studied the opportunities and challenges in Higher education with regard to the Transgenders in India. The researcher enumerated the obstacles faced by them in society such as social

exclusion, harassment, and various forms of violence meted out to them. As a way forward, the researcher harps on the collective responsibility of the government, NGOs, and the society that will transform the lives of transgenders.

### **Representation of the Transgenders in Media**

Shanmugavel (2018) attempted a study on the portrayal of transwomen in Tamil cinema. The Tamil films have misrepresented transwomen in many forms and have stereotyped them for years. Transwomen farce has been one of the most common features of the Tamil cinema and mostly the roles played by them are stereotyped and fixed as characters that are abnormal and ridiculous. This stereotyped misrepresentation of transwomen has played a significant role in their social exclusion. Therefore, the filmmakers should take proper care to ensure the dignified portrayal of the transwomen characters.

### **Psychological Issues of the Transgenders**

Balabantaray and Singh (2020) conducted a study to analyse the various laws passed in India to support transgender education. Except for the Rights of Transgender Persons Bill, 2014 nothing concrete has been done to ensure education for transgenders. The Right to Education Act and National Education Policy 2020 too have not made direct provisions for the betterment of this community. Hence, they recommend more interventions from the government to ensure education for them.

Narrain (2007) studied the legal framework in India from the perspective of transgender issues and their rights. The researcher has analysed the various laws of the land which have not taken into consideration those issues which are very unique to the transgender community. The researcher points out two crucial areas, namely marriage, and family, where the transgender community is discriminated against and legally kept in exclusion. Recommendations are made to make more provisions to include the issues that are very pertinent to the transgender community and make the Indian Constitution and the Legal system more inclusive.

Discrimination and social stigma against transgender people continue to be significant challenges. They encounter unfair treatment in a variety of settings, including school, job, health care, and housing. Many are ostracized by their families and communities, leading to high rates of homelessness and poverty. Employment opportunities for transgender individuals are limited, and many are forced into sex work or begging to survive. They often face job discrimination and harassment, which contributes to their economic marginalization. It is important to recognize that transgenders in India frequently encounter intersecting forms of harassment and marginalization based on characteristics such as caste, religion, and socioeconomic status.

## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND EVOLUTION OF TRANSGENDER RIGHTS**

### **Overview of the historical treatment and recognition of transgender individuals**

Transgender communities have existed in numerous cultural contexts worldwide and have been referred to by various terms: as bakla in the Philippines, xaniths in Oman, and serrers in Kenya (Khan et al, 2009). Various local names have been used worldwide, in North America they are called berdache, whereas in Papua New Guinea they are called Sambia boys, and in Thailand as katoey (Agoramoorthy and Hsu, 2015). In India, the Transgenders are known by different terms such as Hijras, Kinnar, Aravani, Kothi, Shiv-Shakti, and Jogtas / Jogappas and the most popular term being Hijras at the national level and in Tamil Nadu, they are known as Aravani and recently the term ‘Thirunangai’ has become the most popularly used term (Konduru and Hangsing, 2018, p.10). Sometimes terms such as ‘transvestites’, ‘drag queens’, or ‘drag kings’ are also used to denote them (Sangamithra, 2021, p.145).

During the Mughal Empire in the 16th and 17th centuries, hijras who were castrated (eunuchs) were highly respected and the emperors kept them as their close confidants. They were very often employed as royal servants and bodyguards in the palace (Thomas, 2015). However, circumstances changed after the entry of the British into India. When the British took over India in 1860, they made Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which said that homosexuality was a criminal offence and that transgender people were also criminals. This

had a very bad effect on the transgender community. This remained till 2009 and had antagonised and ostracised the transgender community very much and the situation continues till the present time (Agoramoorthy and Hsu, 2015).

A community that had a glorious past and respect from the emperors and the public has now been ostracised and marginalised. Both the state and the society feared the non-conforming behaviour of the transgenders and this led to hostility and discrimination being meted out to them as a result, this community has become the most deprived and disempowered group in Indian society. They are considered less than human beings and are left to live on the margins of society (Anuvinda and Siva, 2016).

### **Legal Framework and Protection of Transgender Rights in India**

Transgender people's legal status has long been a source of dispute and is constantly changing. They have always been rejected and excluded from mainstream society, and the question concerning their identity has gone unanswered and unresolved. Transgender people have faced prejudice and violations of their basic human rights. However, the situation appears to be changing, and changes are being reflected in the Indian legal system by defining transgender people's rights and enacting legislation to support them. The golden triangle, which controls the Indian Constitution's equality system (Articles 14, 19, and 21), ensures that every individual has equal opportunity, regardless of race, caste, religion, race, socioeconomic class, or gender. The fundamental principles of equality are 'the right of choice and self-determination', i.e., determining which gender a person belongs to, which is one of the most fundamental and vital rights they are denied (Pandian, 2022).

### **Milestones and key events in the progression of transgender equality in India**

Transgender rights in India have evolved over the years, with several key milestones and events marking the progression of transgender rights in the country. Indian constitution's Preamble guarantees social justice as well as economic and political equality for all of its citizens. As per Articles 14, and 21 of the Indian constitution, every person is entitled to lead a life with happiness and dignity; depriving them of this right violates the constitutional



provisions granted to the citizens (Gowry, 2022). Though the Indian constitution upheld the rights of transgenders, still they were facing harassment and discrimination in various forms. Here are some of the significant milestones and key events in the history of the Indian judiciary that protected their rights and upheld their human dignity.

The Supreme Court of India's decision in the National Legal Service Authority (NALSA) v. Union of India case, which was decided in April 2014, represented a major victory for the transgender community. The court acknowledged the "third gender" legally for the first time and had a lengthy discussion about gender identity. The court acknowledged that under both international law and the constitution, people who identify as third gender have the same rights to fundamental freedoms as people who identify as cisgender. Additionally, it instructed state governments to create policies and programmes to uplift the social status and realise the rights of transgender people across the nation (Soman and Anand, 2022).

The Supreme Court of India declared in April 2014 that the sexual orientation of an individual is a fundamental component of that individual's identity, respect and liberty and that transgender individuals constitute a third gender. The Rajya Sabha passed the 'Transgender Person (Protection Rights) Act 2014' which not only recognised their gender identity but also upheld their rights due to them. This decision marked an important advancement for the transgender rights movement in India and changed the status of the entire transgender community (Chandra, 2017). To protect transgender people's rights and improve their well-being was the primary objective of the Act. The Act came into effect on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2020. This Act contains 23 sections and some of the important provisions are the Prohibition against discrimination, Right to Residence, Right to Employment, Right to Education, Right to healthcare, and Welfare Measures (Ramya and Ramesh, 2022)

Various states also made some landmark decisions and interventions that transformed the lives of the transgender community. Much earlier, in March 2009, the Tamil Nadu government established a telephone helpline named Manasu for transgender people. This project later resulted in the establishment of India's first helpline for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTIA) community in Madurai in 2011. In July

2016, the Odisha state government proposed plans to provide social welfare benefits such as pension funds, residence, and groceries. In the same year, the government of Kerala made free Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) available at state-run hospitals for transgender people. In November 2017, N Chandrababu Naidu, who was Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh at the time, announced pension schemes for transgender people (Sharma and Mishra, 2020).

The government has announced several projects and policies aimed at improving the lives of transgender individuals. Nonetheless, these people's fight for daily existence and societal recognition continues. The transgender community confronts significant levels of prejudice and bias in practically every aspect of their lives. Transgender people are subjected to physical, sexual, and emotional assault, as well as neglect and discrimination, particularly throughout their childhood. They are frequently isolated and abused, and they are not permitted to socialise with their peers. Families and schools serve as torture dungeons for effeminate males, who suffer charges from teachers for breaking school and societal rules. The transgender community requires a safe space to pursue educational and professional possibilities.

### **ANALYSIS OF THE TRIALS CONFRONTED BY TRANSGENDERS IN PURSUING THEIR RIGHTS**

As we have already discussed in this article, the government has announced several programmes aimed at improving the lives of the transgender population. But there are many unexplored areas where the transgenders remain invisible and anonymous.

Since the transgenders are not accepted in their own families, they move out of their families to live an independent life. Since they were not provided safety and security, they began to organise themselves and started living in small communities of transgenders called Jamaats (Babbar, 2016). These Jamaats resemble our families where the transgenders adopt one another as family members addressing each other as mother, grandmother, aunt, sister etc., but this in the nuances of the society and the law is not recognised as a real family. This is because society and the law view family and marriage with a gender binary perspective only.

Another societal institution where the transgenders are kept excluded is Marriage. Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights defines the family as ‘the natural and fundamental group of a unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and state’ (Narrain, 2007). The word ‘natural’ includes primarily a male and a female which is a very strong gender binary perspective and categorically ignores the third gender. This can be further understood by analysing some of the laws in India. The Workmen’s Compensation Act gives provision only a member of the heterosexual family or a relative by marriage to receive the compensation. Similarly, the Insurance Policy after the intervention of the Supreme Court in 2014 introduced the third gender option in the application. But the right to be a nominee is predominantly reserved only to relations by marriage and blood relatives. Nevertheless, the option is given to include others too but the entire procedure is very strenuous. On the other hand, when it comes to the Criminal Law, the transgender community is treated severely. For example, section 377 of the Indian Penal Code made it a crime to engage in any sexual relations that goes against the natural order. Here transgenders are treated as sexual offenders against public morality and the law of the land (Narrain, 2007). It was only in 2018 when the Supreme Court declared this section unconstitutional and until then they were considered as criminals of sexual immorality.

### **Transgender Rights and Human Dignity**

Transgender rights are an essential component for upholding their human dignity. International human rights law firmly establishes human dignity as a foundational tenet (United Nations, 1948). It declares that all individuals, irrespective of their identity, are entitled to equitable and respectful treatment. In India, the struggle for transgender rights is intrinsically linked to the preservation of human dignity.

### **Upholding transgender rights is essential for ensuring human dignity**

There are various reasons for not accepting them into the mainstream society. Some of the most common notions are: i) Since they are involved in survival sex to fulfil their basic needs people look at them with contempt as moral offenders and as people with low ethical

standards ii) Since some of the transgenders involved in begging sport indecent and harsh behaviour people look at them with aversion. From the observations made so far it is evident that, among the other challenges faced, the transgender community continues to face social exclusion and discrimination in crucial areas namely Housing, Healthcare, Employment, Legal Recognition and Marriage.

Since Transgenders are poor and isolated, they are denied access to all forms of health services. Several cases of Transgenders being denied housing is an everyday story. Due to a lack of proper documentation, they refused proper shelter and accommodation. There is no legal support for them to enter into marriage, having a spouse, or starting a family. They have been regularly facing workplace discrimination as well as employment discrimination (Ramya and Ramesh, 2022). Creating avenues in these areas would surely give them a place in mainstream society and ensure a dignified living. Nevertheless, to eradicate the prejudice implanted in people's minds regarding the transgender community the state and the NGOs should come forward to create and ensure Employment and Educational opportunities for them at the outset.

## **CONCLUSION**

Transgender rights are inseparably entwined with the preservation of human dignity in India (Supreme Court of India, 2014). Before the Supreme Court's landmark 2014 verdict recognizing transgender as a third gender, this community often lived in the shadows, denied the most basic legal rights. The declaration of transgender people as a third gender in India confirms their freedom to self-identification and provides them with the same legal standing and rights as other Indian citizens. This not only empowers them but also sends a powerful message that their identities are valid and deserving of respect. Such recognition is an essential step in preserving their human dignity.

## **WAY FORWARD**

At the end of this short study, the researcher makes the following recommendations to ensure safety, social inclusion and dignity for the transgender community:

- Awareness needs to be created of Gender diversity. Schools and colleges should address the concerns of transgenders in order to empower them through education.
- It is necessary for the media and other public platforms to highlight transgender human rights issues in order to increase public consciousness and enable transgender individuals to exercise their rights.
- Doctors and healthcare providers should be sensitive to the unique needs of transgenders. To mitigate instances of psychosocial harassment and discrimination, it is imperative to establish education programmes targeting mental health experts, including counsellors and psychotherapists.
- Parents must be educated to accept their gender non-conforming or transgender children, even if they are uncomfortable or hold traditional beliefs. The government should frame policies to continually include the transgender community in various schemes and this would normalise their presence among the mainstream society.
- The state along with the collaboration of the NGOs should make consolidated efforts to provide training for the transgender community and make them entrepreneurs / self-employed and also help them with employment opportunities. This would remove the stigma that is imposed on them as ‘sex workers.’

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EVALUATION OF THE TRAINING ON “MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING” AMONG SELF-HELP GROUP WOMEN IN THIRUKAZHUKUNDRAM BLOCK, CHENGALPATTU DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU

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ABSTRACT

*According to the Rights of Persons with Disability Act, 2016, mental illness or mental disorder is considered a disability impairing reality acceptance or routine life. Due to the serious concern of mental health in the Thirukazhukundram block, STEPS organization took efforts to create mental disability awareness among the self-help group (SHG) women leaders, the major players in family and society who became the mental health ambassadors in the community to identify mentally ill persons for further support. During October 2022, a basic training on “Mental health and well-being” was aimed to increase awareness on mental disability among SHG leaders. 207 SHG leaders were trained from 10 Panchayats of Thirukazhukundram block. Based on the training, an impact assessment was made among the randomly selected 50 SHG leaders to understand their knowledge on mental health and their approach towards mental illness. The training was found to be very helpful not only in identifying the mental health issues of others but their personal knowledge on the rights of mental health persons increased among SHG women leaders who have started helping people with stress. Hence, the assessment shows that similar training should be given to other SHG leaders in the block for further reach due to its meaningful impact.*

**Key words:** Mental Health, Mental Disability, Self-Help Group, Training and Knowledge

## **INTRODUCTION**

According to the Rights of Persons with Disability Act, 2016, “Mental illness or mental disorder is considered a disability which completely impairs behaviour, judgment, capacity to recognize one’s ability and capabilities to fulfill the daily demands and requirements of life. The primary aim of enacting the Act was to safeguard the interests of people suffering from disabilities, uphold dignity of disabled people and prevent discrimination against them calling for an inclusive society. Disability has been defined based on an evolving and dynamic concept and expands the list of disabilities from seven to 21, thus covering the mental disability”.

Math SB, et.al (2019) observes that the word “mental disability” is employed when a psychiatric illness meaningfully impairs the performance of major life activities such as self-care, working, communication, understanding, participation and interpersonal activities. Further, attitudinal and environmental blockades hinder active and full participation of the persons with mental illness in the society making them stigmatized and discriminated”.

There is a serious concern of mental health in the Thirukazhukundram block of Chengalpattu district in Tamil Nadu state. According to the 2011 census, “The taluk of Thirukazhukundram consisting of 95 villages had a population of 196,807 and with 97,426 females and with 99,381 males. There were 1000 men for every 980 women. With agriculture as the primary occupation, the levels of education are low and most belong to the lower socio-economic class. The available health facilities are one Community Health Centre (CHC), three Primary Health Centers (PHC), and 34 sub-centres with nurses. The closest psychiatric facility is a state-run hospital which is 14 kms away. There are no government and private psychiatric care centres in the block”.

### **About STEPS**

STEPS (Service Towards Empowerment of People and Society) is a non- government and non-profit organization committed to quality and comprehensive Physical, Mental, Social, Economical, Cultural, Environmental, Agricultural (Organic), Legal, Folk arts and Moral

Development of all people without bias and distinction of creed, caste, colour or community and gender.

The STEPS organization has been working for community mental health service since March 2021 at Thirukazhukundram block of Chengalpattu District. It has been directly working with eighty-five (85) families of mentally ill persons in thirty-five (35) villages in the block and help them get psychiatric treatment by attending the outpatient department at the government general hospital at Chengalpattu and Banayan at Kovalam. The community health workers regularly follow up with the client by visiting the home and make sure that the client take medicine without fail and get social care support services. The health worker also provides individual and family counselling for those struggling with mental health issues and persons who have suicidal thoughts. It creates awareness of mental health for MGNREGA workers, school and college students and conducts training on “Mental Health and well-being” for self-help Group (SHG) leaders.

Self Help Groups (SHGs) are known as informal groups of persons involving people of similar socio-economic backgrounds who find ways to improve their living conditions. Self Help Group is normally containing 10-20 women from marginalized and under privileged section of society who save a little amount of money from their livelihood and earnings for a common fund ([www.studyiq.com](http://www.studyiq.com)).

Rais Ahmad (207) observed that, in SHGs common fund is generated by every individual member if the group from their small earnings and savings on the basis of regularity. By being a member of this group, every woman is capable of saving and getting access to the economy and chances pf playing economical role both in the family and in the community. This role is very significant for better socio-economic status and life promotion.

These SHG women are empowered by various training programs and income-generation assistance by NGOs as well as the government. The SHG leaders have also proved their achievements through their entrepreneurial activities and their improved standard of living. But their awareness on mental disability is still a gap, as there are no programmes from

government to sensitize them on mental health. Hence, this study attempted to provide training on mental health as the SHG women leaders are the major players not only in a family but also in a society taking up the responsibility of improving the economic conditions. Thus, they are given yet another role as mental health ambassadors to identify mentally ill persons in the community for further support.

### **VARIOUS METHODS USED**

STEPS as a part of promoting mental health in the community is keen on creating awareness of mental health and well-being through a structured training model for various stakeholders in the community like officials of the local government organizations, teachers, students, Panchayat functionaries, SHG members, youth groups, etc. During October 2022, a basic training on “Mental health and well-being” was aimed to increase awareness on mental health disability among SHG leaders. 207 SHG leaders were trained from 10 Panchayats of Thirukazhukundram block.

#### **The contents of the training programme include:**

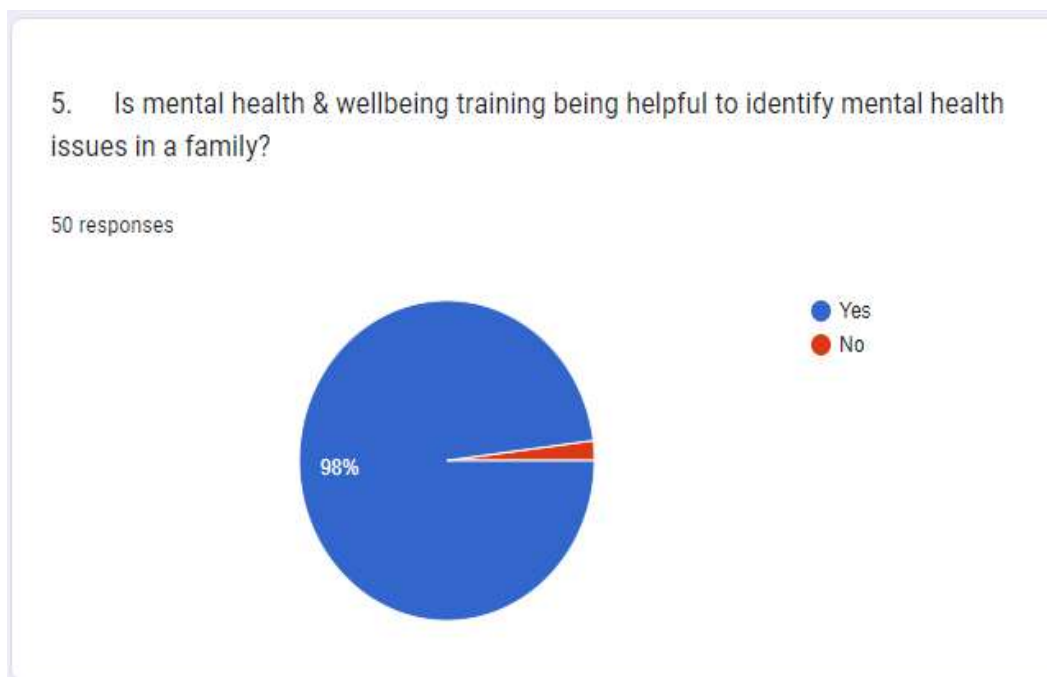
- a) Introduction to concepts of mental health and well-being
- b) A brief introduction to mental health disability
- c) How to manage stress and cope with the same?
- d) How to promote mental health in oneself?
- e) How to become a STEPS mental health ambassador?

Based on the training, an impact assessment was made among the randomly selected 50 SHG leaders to understand their knowledge on mental health and their approach towards mental illness.

## MAJOR FINDINGS

Most of the respondents were educated from middle school to higher secondary and very few have completed under graduation. Most of the respondents were MGNREGA workers. The SHG leaders became key people after attending the training and helping to identify the new mentally ill clients in the community. More than ten mentally ill people were identified by the SHG leaders and referred for support.

**Figure 01: Help identify mental disability**



It was found that a vast majority (98%) of the respondents reported that the mental health and well-being training helped them to identify their family member's mental health issues.

**Figure 02: Better acceptance of mental disability**



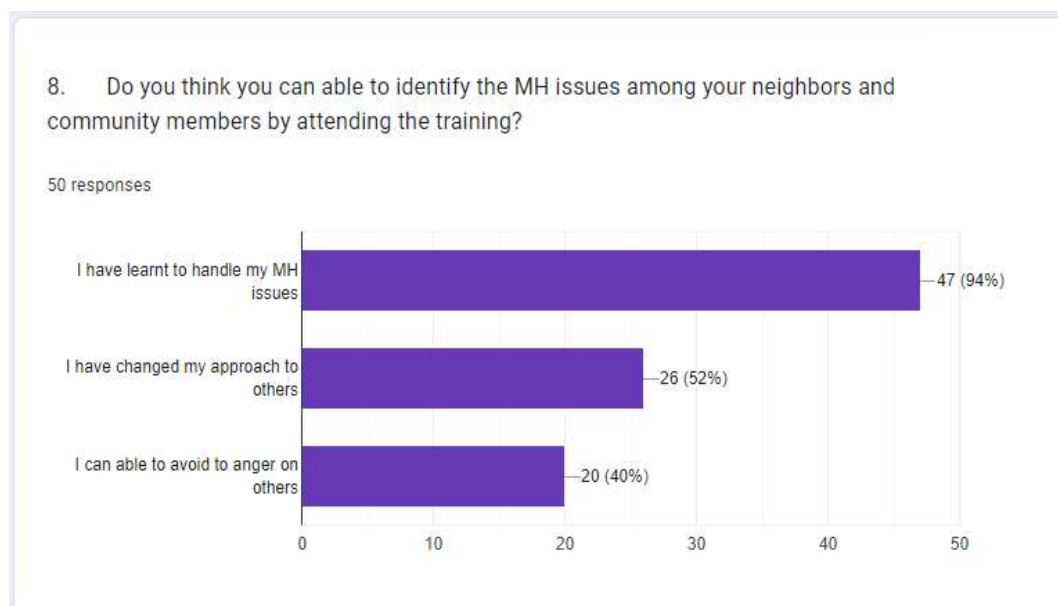
The assessment indicated that all of them (100%) who participated in the training reported that the mental health and well-being training was helping them to accept their family member's mental health issues and disabilities. Therefore, there was better acceptance of mental disability.

**Figure 03: Ability to manage family's mental disability**



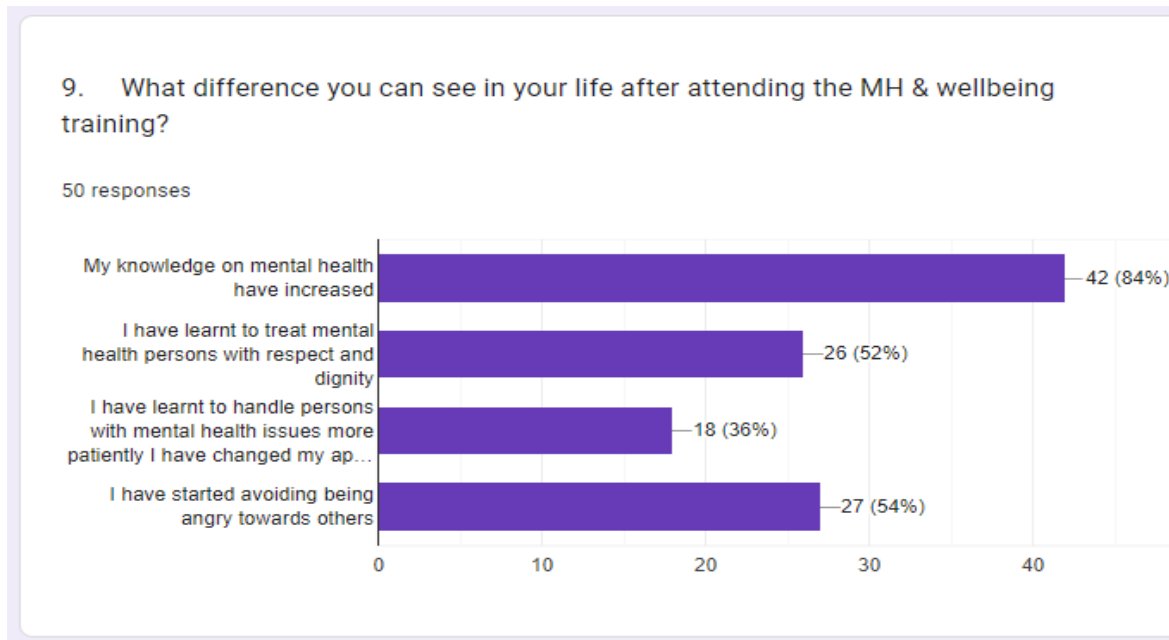
According to the impact assessment, all the respondents (100%) mentioned that attending the training helped them to manage their family’s mental health issues due to the awareness and knowledge gained during the training. Therefore, the respondents were able to handle better the mental disabilities in family.

**Figure 04: Benefits of the training**



The benefits of attending the training program were shared by the respondents. A vast majority (94%) of the respondents reported that they have learnt to handle their personal mental health issues. More than half (52%) of the respondents reported that their approach to others have changed and close to two-fifths (40%) of the respondents reported that they can avoid anger towards others after attending the training.

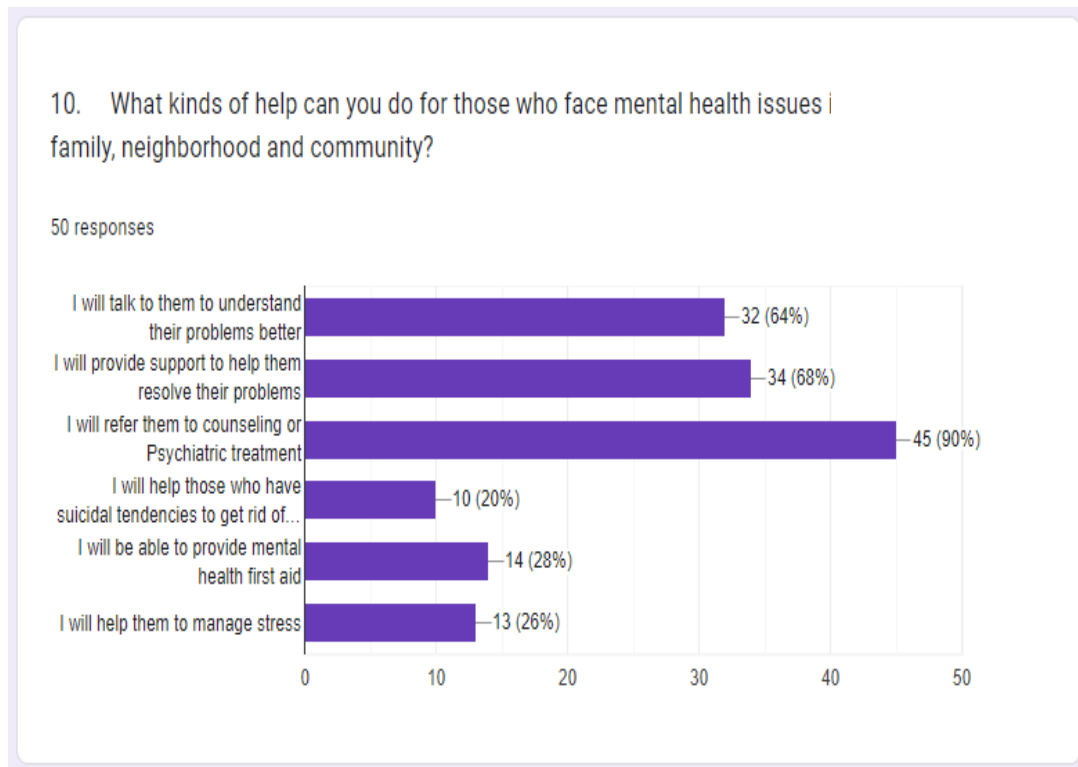
**Figure05: Attitudinal change**



The respondents also shared the differences they had seen after attending the training. A majority (84%) of the respondents reported that their knowledge of mental health has increased after attending the training. While 54% of the respondents have started avoiding anger towards others, 52% of respondents reported that they have learnt to treat the person with mental disability with respect and dignity. More than one-third (36%) of the respondents reported that they have learnt to handle mentally ill persons more patiently. Thus, they could see some kind of attitudinal change.



**Figure 06: Support to family and community**



The assessment was also made to understand the kind of support the respondents can provide to the family/neighbourhood/community after attending the training. A vast majority (90%) of the respondents reported that in case they find anyone with mental disability in their family/neighbourhood/community, they will refer them for mental health counselling and psychiatric treatment. 68% of the respondents mentioned that they provide support to the person to solve their mental health-related issues themselves and 64% respondents reported that they will talk to them to understand their issues better.

## **CONCLUSION**

The assessment was conducted in the Thirkazhukundram block of Chengalpattu district in October 2022 to measure the impact of mental health and well-being training among the SHG leaders. Based on the data collected from the respondents, the training was found to be very helpful in identifying the mental health issues of their family members as well as the community members. The training also has helped the SHG leaders to accept, manage and handle their mental health issues and their family members. They also changed their approach towards others and learnt to avoid anger towards others after attending the training.

More importantly, they could able to see that their personal knowledge on the rights of mental health persons increased after the training. The ways of treating the person with mental illness have also changed and have started respecting them with dignity. The SHG women leaders now encourage others to talk openly about their mental health issues, help overcome the stress of others and refer the needed family members and community people for psychiatric support. Thus, the above assessment shows that the training has made a remarkable impact on the SHG leaders. Hence, the assessment shows that similar training should be given to other SHG leaders in the block for further reach due to its meaningful impact.

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## DROP OUT TO DOMESTIC WORK CASE STUDY OF YOUNG DOMESTIC WORKERS IN CENTRAL CHENNAI

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### ABSTRACT

*Education is the most important instrument for human resource development. Education of Women, therefore occupies top priority among various measures taken to improve the status of women in India. In recent years the focus of planning has shifted from equipping women for their traditional roles as housewives and mothers to recognizing their worth as producers, making a major contribution to family and national income.*

*Girls with more education are more likely to refrain from child marriage and experience better maternal and child health outcomes. Additionally, they are more willing and able to make investments in the well-being and education of their sons and daughters, hence raising the likelihood that their daughters will pursue higher education. In the area of education, developments are occurring quickly. According to recent data, enrolment has significantly increased, yet dropout rates are a cause for concern. The enrolment rates for girls are still falling daily despite the creation of numerous committees, commissions, and government-sponsored initiatives and programmes. The issues with a girl's education start at home. Poor family circumstances, taking care of younger siblings, and housekeeping duties at home are also seen to be factors affecting girls' access to education. When she followed her mother after starting her job as a housekeeper, her life drastically changed. In this paper, the researcher*

*uses the case study method to highlight the lives of ten young girls who dropped out of school for various societal reasons and now work as domestic workers in Central Chennai.*

**Keywords:** Education, Girl Child, School Dropout, Domestic Work.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The cornerstone of every progress and a key engine of expansion is education. It has been demonstrated to be essential to achieving social advancement, better health, and sustained and equitable economic progress in every nation. An important tool for bringing about social revolution is education. At all levels and with children of all ages, it is the only treatment that can bring about the required societal transformation in Indian society. Education has been seen as a significant socialization force, along with educators and educational institutions. It is the essential tool that can be used to successfully combat the ingrained vices that rule society.

The general social perception of girls' education is negative. Education for girls is seen as a crucial step in eradicating social ills such the pardah system, early marriage, parental illiteracy, and a lack of educational resources at home. Other barriers for girls to accessing school include male tutors and teachers and the obligations of girls at home. Poor family circumstances, taking care of younger siblings, and housekeeping duties at home are also seen to be factors affecting girls' access to education. The female pupils are really driven to avoid going to college.

Parents' views on how expensive higher education is, family guidance and the inaccessibility of higher education counselling for girls in the Urban Habitat and their parents are further barriers. Girls in metropolitan environments may succeed in their higher education by reducing the aforementioned issues. The success of females' higher education and careers may also depend on proper assistance and counseling provided to illiterate parents, fee reductions, and other facilities provided for girls in metropolitan environments.

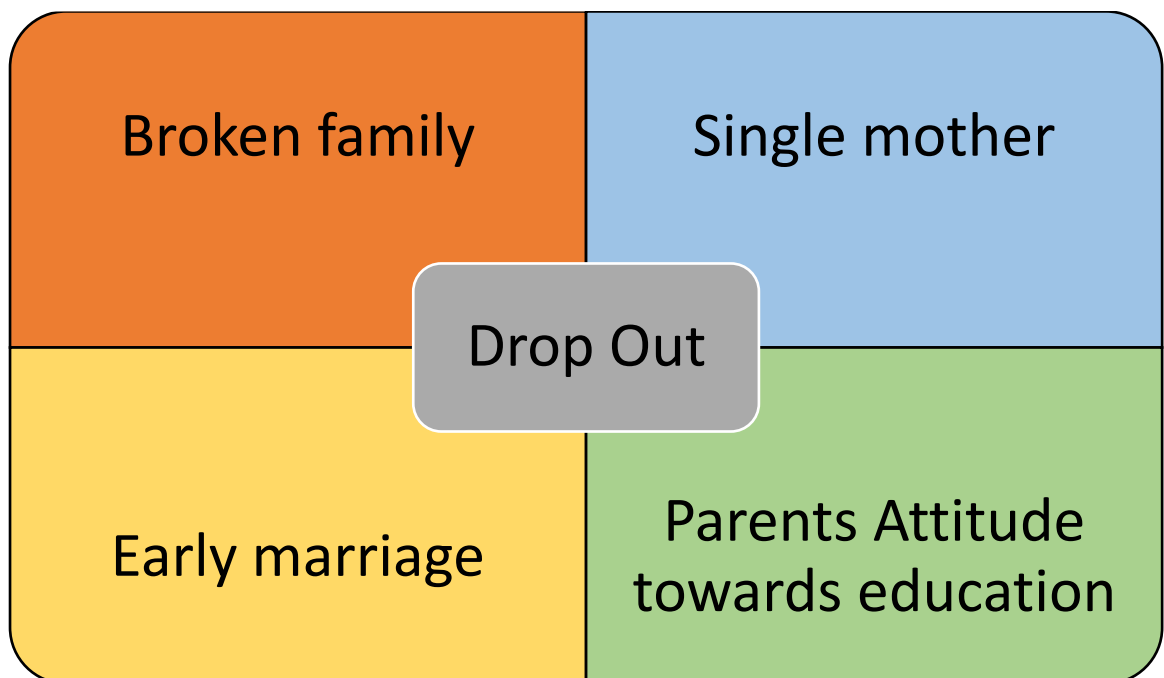
## RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Despite concerted efforts to improve the enrolment of girls and provide adult education for women, their educational status is still far from satisfactory. Female enrolment in educational institutions is low as when compared with males and dropout rates are high. This research paper attempts to assess how being a school dropout has led many adolescent girls to enter into Domestic work. Also, to analyze the reasons for dropping out of school and the reason for choosing Domestic work as an option.

### Dropout - a Universal Phenomena

Dropout is a universal phenomenon of the education system in India, the need for educating girls is not considered worthwhile in urban and rural areas. Certain factors leads to drop out rate high among girls.

Figure 01: Factors Leading to Drop Out



Source: Author as created it in 2024.

- The requirement for older girls to stay at home to take care of siblings when mothers are away for Domestic work.
- Girls are sent to work to help in augmenting the family income due to broken families or single-parent families.
- Early marriage of girls.
- Social customs that hinder female mobility after puberty.
- Lack of relevance of school curriculum.

### **Drop out to Domestic Work**

*Cultural and social beliefs, attitudes, and practices prevent girls from going to school:*

There is always a powerful economic and social rationale for investing in the education of sons rather than daughters. Hence, the majority of the world's out-of-school youth are female. In most cities, girls are underrepresented at every level of formal education. Keeping girls in school, even at the primary level, and their performance depends largely upon socioeconomic factors and upon the attitudes of teachers. When daily survival is a huge challenge, spending on girls child education is a big question.

### ***Parents attitude towards Girls Education:***

Parents objections to their daughters going to school are more likely to be on the grounds of safety. They sometimes feel that school is unsafe and the journey to school is perilous or sometimes long. Alternatively, they believe that sacrificing the daughter's education and sending her to domestic work would enhance the family's income and survival.

### ***Rythm of income at Young Age:***

Girls at a young age are introduced to simple household chores and minor income generation tasks by accompanying their mothers who are domestic workers. These tasks

gradually become routine, establishing an everyday rhythm in the child's life. Soon tasks take up more of the child's day, at which point it becomes difficult to introduce schooling into the routine.

### **CHALLENGES FACED BY DOMESTIC WORKERS**

The challenges and the problems faced by young people working as domestic workers are multidimensional. Domestic works performed in many different homes make their life hectic and burdensome. Some of the challenges and issues that they face are:

- ❖ Doing monotonous works and repetitive works in manifold households.
- ❖ Cleaning and doing the works with washing agents and corrosive chemical materials.
- ❖ Constant increase of workload due to the visit of visitors and guests at employer's house.
- ❖ Continuous shifts of works at different locations.
- ❖ Multiple abuses faced by them in the form of partiality, snubbing and exclusion. Abuses include sexual, verbal, physical and emotional too.

When a girl enters into Domestic work at an early age it deprives her of their rights to education, health, protection, and participation, limiting their future opportunities and social mobility.

### **CASE STUDIES OF YOUNG DOMESTIC WORKERS**

To get a deeper qualitative understanding of the daily lives and activities of domestic workers, this paper uses the case study methodology.

The human side of domestic workers' impoverishment is depicted through the use of case study methodology. This innovative approach focuses on regular encounters and occurrences in domestic workers' lives. Additionally, it looks into each person's particular experience and offers a thorough understanding of their actual living and working



circumstances. The foundation of case studies is the direct observation of informal interactions amongst 10 young unmarried domestic workers in Central Chennai between the age group of 17 to 20 years.

### **1. Vasanthi**

A 19-year-old girl was unable to continue her higher education due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Her dreams were shattered and she was forced to enter into Domestic work like her mother. She was passionate about becoming a nurse but due to her family's financial crisis, she was unable to pursue her higher education. Her 12<sup>th</sup> grade score also was very low. She was unable to cope up with online classes during the pandemic.

She entered Domestic work after completing 12<sup>th</sup> grade in 2021. For two years she has been working as a Domestic worker in 5 houses. Her work involves cleaning utensils, sweeping and Mopping houses. Her day starts from 10 am to 3 pm. She is a young vibrant girl and the employer extracts a lot of extra work from the girl. She is going to get married within a week. Her poverty has compelled her to enter into domestic work and also early marriage.

### **2. Selvi**

Being drop out at the age of 18 after 10<sup>th</sup> Std, she did not have much interest in her studies. She entered Domestic work with the help of her mother who is also a domestic worker. For the past 2 years, she has been working as a domestic worker in 5 houses. Her work involves, washing utensils, Sweeping and moping the house and washing clothes.

Every day her work starts at 9 am and ends at 3 pm. She complains about long working hours and no weekly off. She is compelled to carry water up the stairs to the employer's place. She is having body pain due to carrying heavy weight. She is getting married in a month to her relative at the early age of 18 years.

### **3. Gowri**

The girl lost her father in the COVID-19 pandemic which has drastically changed her life into a domestic worker. At the age of 19, she dropped out of school in her 11<sup>th</sup> std. She and her mom entered domestic work at the same time. For two years she has been working as a domestic worker in 4 houses from 9 am to 2 pm.

Her work involves cleaning utensils, sweeping and mopping of floor. Being a young domestic worker, she is paid very little but has done a lot of work. She carries water in steps to two floors which is very painful, especially during her menstruation period. She works for her younger sister who is studying in 9<sup>th</sup> std. She wants to educate her and send her to college for higher studies. The COVID-19 pandemic has compelled her to enter into Domestic work.

### **4. Lakshmi**

Being a drop after 11<sup>th</sup> std, she did not have interest in her studies and hence entered domestic work like her mom. She wanted to earn more money and save money for her marriage.

She is in love with a boy in her neighbourhood and wants to marry him. The boy is also a dropout and wanders in the area jobless. She works in 5 houses from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Her work involves cleaning utensils, sweeping and mopping the floor and watering the plants. She complains of long hours of work which is very tiresome.

### **5. Thangapushpam**

A 19-year-old girl dropped out from school in her 11<sup>th</sup> std. She was unable to continue her studies due to the death of her father in a road accident. She started to work as a domestic worker with the help of her mother. She works in 4 houses. Her day starts at 9 am every day and she work in 5 houses. Her work involves cleaning of utensils, sweeping, moping and washing clothes. She is a young domestic worker; hence she is paid very little and she works like an adult. She complains of long-standing hours and has severe body pain. She also uses Paan to manage her body pain.

### **6. Devi**

A 20-year-old girl was dropped out of school after her 10<sup>th</sup> grade. She started to work as a domestic worker with the help of her mom. She lost interest in her studies because of her family situation. Her father is a drunkard and she also beats her mother and also lives with another woman. He hardly comes home. Hence the girl decided to work and help her mother. Her day starts at 10 am and she works till 3 pm, She works in 5 houses. Her work involves cleaning of utensils, sweeping, mopping and washing the clothes. She complains of long-standing hours and less pay. Broken family is another main factor which affects the education of the girl child.

### **7. Sasi**

A 17-year-old girl was dropped out of school after her 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Since then, she has been working as a domestic worker with the help of her mother. Her day starts at 9 am in the morning and she works till 2 pm. She works in 4 houses. Her work involves cleaning utensils, sweeping, mopping and washing clothes. She dropped out of school after her father left them and started to live with another woman. Her mom couldn't cope with the expenses of the family. Hence Sasi discontinued her studies and started to work with her mother. Initially, she went with her mother and helped her in domestic work. later she started to work individually. Extra martial relationships lead to broken family in turn affects the family structures and peace.

### **8. Priya**

A 19-year-old girl was dropped out of school after her 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Since then, she has been working as a domestic worker with the help of her mother. Her father was a drunkard and died when she was studying 8<sup>th</sup> std. After the death of her father, she discontinued her studies and started to work as a domestic worker.

Her day starts at 9 am in the morning and she works till 2 pm. her work involves cleaning of utensils, sweeping and mopping. She complains of long working hours, no pay off and severe body pain. She uses the pan and has high-risk behaviour of having a friendship with

boys and girls who are using drugs in the locality. Single parents have issues in parenting their children. Mother being a domestic worker is unable to strike a work-life balance which

### **9. Anitha**

A 19-year-old girl dropped out from school after she completed her 9<sup>th</sup> std. She started to work as a domestic worker with the help of her mother. She dropped out of school as she did not have interest in continuing her studies due to peer pressure. He and his friends also are school dropouts.

She works as a domestic worker in 4 houses. Her day starts at 9 am in the morning and she works till 3 pm. Her work involves washing utensils, sweeping and mopping. She also waters the plants in certain houses. She is not interested in going back to school as she earns well in this work. She complains of being less paid and having no weekly offs. Peer pressure is also an alarming factor that influences drop out among girl children.

### **10. Swetha**

A 18 year old girl dropped out of school after her 10<sup>th</sup> grade. She started to work as a domestic worker with the help of her mother. Her day starts at 9 am in the morning and she works till 3 pm. Her work involves cleaning utensils, sweeping and moping. She also washes clothes in her hands.

She complains of severe body pain and is less paid. She discontinued her studies to help her mother who is a single parent. Her father lives with another woman which has forced the family to enter domestic work.

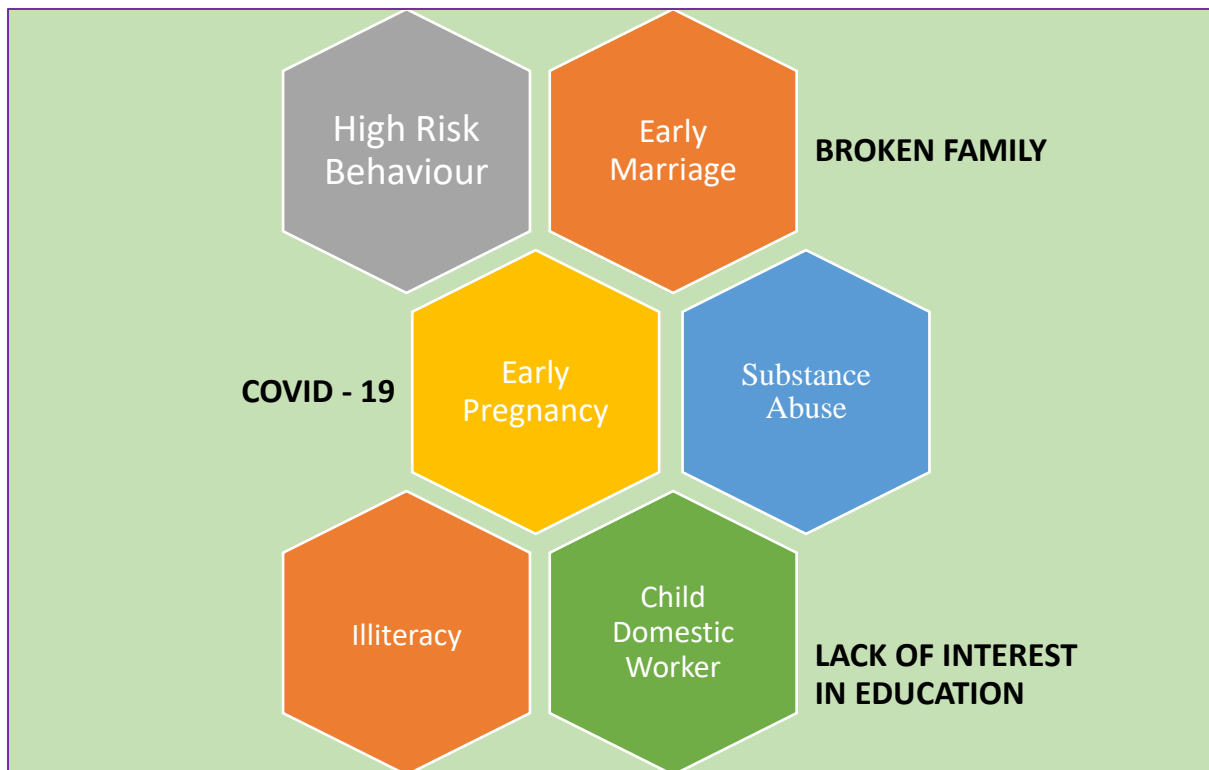
## **DISCUSSION**

- ❖ The ten case studies mentioned above conclusively demonstrate that they have entered Domestic work with the help of their mother who is also a domestic worker.
- ❖ Most of the girls have dropped out of school due to the issues in the family and to help the family to face the financial crisis.

- ❖ Some girls were forced to drop out due to the sudden demise of their father.
- ❖ Some of them being a child of the single mother were unable to continue their studies.
- ❖ Being young the girls were paid very less but made to work for long hours.
- ❖ Two girls have dropped out of school due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ❖ Some girls were going to get married in a couple of months.
- ❖ Some girls are influenced by their friends and take Pan to get relief from body pain.
- ❖ Some girls are also involved in high-risk behaviour being a dropout.

### **MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

**Figure 02: Distribution of the Study Findings of Drop Out**



**Source:** The author has created from the data gathered during the study.

## **IMPACT OF THE STUDY**

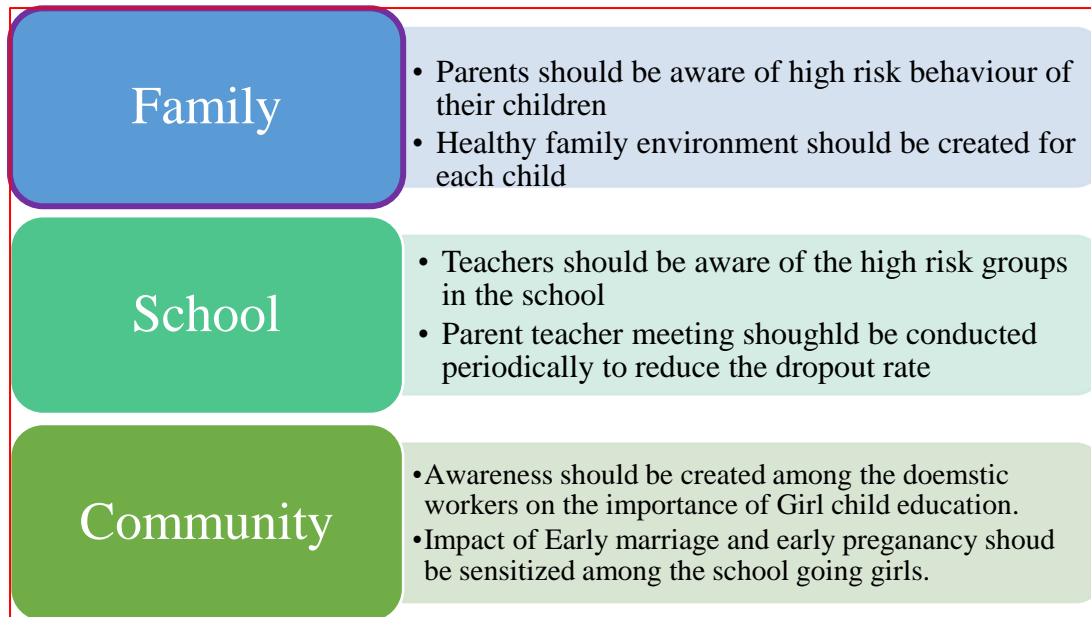
1. The mother being a domestic worker has influenced the children also enter into domestic work after being a dropout from school.
2. Due to drop out the girls are highly prone for early marriage and early pregnancy.
3. Being a dropout has also influenced some girls into high-risk behaviour due to their peer pressure.
4. Some girls due to long working hours of domestic work have developed body pain. These girls take Pan to get rid of the body pain.
5. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the education of the girls which has forced them to enter into domestic work.
6. Broken family is another main factor that has forced the girls to enter into domestic work.

## **SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION**

School dropout is a universal phenomenon that affects especially girl children. Girls who drop out enter into domestic work which is part of the vicious cycle. Mother next the daughter enters domestic work which is a serious social problem in society. Social work intervention is very essential to address this social issue. Social work interventions range from from various stakeholders in the community.

Social Work Interventions are given in terms of family, school and community.

**Figure 03: Social Work Interventions**



**Source:** The researcher has created the diagram in 2024.

## CONCLUSION

This paper brings to light the untold stories of the school dropouts to Domestic work in Central Chennai. It was also observed that if parents are domestic workers, the possibility of dropout among their children was relatively high. The major reasons understood from the case study were young girls have dropped out of school due to broken families, Alcoholic fathers, Single mothers and also due to COVID 19 pandemic. After families, education is the next perimeter of a protective environment for children. Education remains a key safeguard preventing girls from entering into domestic work at a young age. If educated girls become mothers they are much more likely to send their children to school than to domestic work, there by passing on and multiplying benefits both for themselves and society in a positive intergenerational effect. Unless and until there is considerable improvement in the economic status of individuals and change in the social attitudes of parents, achieving the goal of universalization of school education will remain a major challenge in society.

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## SOCIAL ADAPTATION OF INTERSTATE CONSTRUCTION MIGRANT WORKERS IN GRANTLINE, CHENNAI, TAMIL NADU

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### ABSTRACT

*Migration is not a new phenomenon. Since ages, people migrate from one place to another for so many reasons like better opportunity, climate change, drought, displacement, employment etc. Regional imbalances in development within the country have led people to migrate from a few states of India more often and high in number. Tamil Nadu receives more such migrants on a daily basis and employs them in almost all the fields. As TN is in its development phase, the construction field gives more opportunity to the migrant workers. It's evident that migrant workers are major contributors to economic and social development. Once the migrants hail to the new land, it may get harder for them to adjust to live in accordance with interpersonal, social and cultural norms. Social adaptation of the migrants will increase communities' resilience and support economic development. Meanwhile they adapt to the migrated place, survive and contribute back to their family and home state, their struggle is huge. This article constitutes an empirical view of social adaptation analysis based on a field study among construction migrant workers at Grantline, Chennai. The main aim of this study was to examine how migrant workers from other States adapt to the new work environment with less basic facilities and not knowing the language of the workplace. The method of data collection used for this study was case study. Based on the observation, the article throws light on the living conditions of the migrant workers and recommends the policy makers to take necessary measures to protect the human rights of the migrant workers.*

**Key words:** *Migrants, Interstate Migrants, labourers, unorganised workforce, construction workers, social adaptation, Tamil Nadu.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Chennai as one of the oldest cities in India had witnessed the migration in the colonial era. Since the time of east India Company, people from other province and districts have migrated to Chennai for the purpose of doing trade, as bonded labour, film industry and many others. Migration is an inevitable process; which is very common from early days. The migration that is happening in recent days is mainly focusing on their livelihood and betterment. Due to increase in job opportunities across the states and upgradation in the science and technology, it is by force or pressure we could see few states are having high migrant workers population. Tamil Nadu is evident in encouraging inter-state migrant workers because of its speedy industrialization and governing policies towards foreign investments.

The essence of the old Tamil adage “*Vandharai Vazha Vaikkum Tamizhagam*” (Tamil Nadu provides livelihood to anyone who enters the state) Chennai is one of the main hubs for migrant workers involved in the infrastructure sector (i.e. Construction). Chair of International Institute of Migration and Development S Irudaya Rajan said migration is unstoppable once the wheel sets motion. The influx of migrants from northern states to Tamil Nadu and Kerala has been happening in large numbers for over a period of time.

## **ADAPTATION**

In the literary language it is perceived as accommodation and adjustment. In biology it expresses the accommodation of organisms to environmental conditions for existence. adaptation is interpreted as the accommodation of the individual to the social environment. It is noteworthy that the concept is being studied in various fields of science, with both natural and humanitarian subjects. Theories of Charles Darwin and J.B. Lamarck had also argued that any living creature will survive only by adaptation. Adaptation is the key for growth and development.

## **SOCIAL ADAPTATION**

Social Adaptation is a system of measures aimed at adapting a citizen, who is in a difficult life situation, to the rules and norms of behaviour accepted in society, and to his environment of life. The adjustment of individual and group behaviour to conform with the prevailing system of norms and values in a given society, class, or social group.

Adaptation of man is the reflection about the stages of development in sociological thought. In order to understand and describe the social processes, sociologists use the most significant achievements of biology, including adaptation category. Sociologist H. Spenser represented society as “social organism”.

“Theory of equilibrium” sees adaptation as a sustainable balance of the individual with the society. Adaptation leads to complicated structure and increase functionality. Adaptation is a combination of several aspects like moral, political, legal, socio-psychological, economic and professional. An individual will attribute these aspects of social adaptation in different aspects of public life, by which the individual seeks himself in the sense of existence. Social adaptability leads to a conflict-free social development of the individual, and stabilization of the social community. The degree of social adaptability determines the degree of active involvement of the individual in the day today life of the social community.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Urbanisation is the process which includes both positive and negative sides. The city gets expanded by its size and population. This process includes change of population identity, adaptation of new life style and gradual change of ideology. The migrants in construction area are the main contributors for this process but still find it difficult to be part of the city. They find it difficult to cope up with unfamiliar city, nil experience of city life, no knowledge about the new environment, unknown language, unfamiliar food and culture, lack of cognition about the dynamics of the new society etc.

Thus, in the process of living and settlement in the hosting land, their economic life, social life, interpersonal relationships, cultural value are challenges for them to adapt the social life. Migrants experience stress and anxiety to face the complex urban life. They sometimes feel helpless being secularised, rationalised and diversified in the host land. They tend to miss their life back in their homeland, their family etc. Once adapt to the new land, their perceptions, life style and psychological wellbeing will change.

In this study, the researcher has observed the social adaptation process among the migrants through case study method. Case Study method is used to understand the depth of the problem and get detailed information. There are 10 case studies presented here to understand whether migrants adapted to the life in Chennai? whether the level of social adaptation has helped the migrants to live at ease in Chennai?

## **CASE STUDIES**

### **CASE 1-Muksed SK -Mason, 38-year-old from Uthadinajpur, West Bengal.**

He is working in Chennai for the past 2 years. He doesn't know the native language of the workplace. For all the requirements he completely depends on the agent. He lives, along with 10 roommates in single room. He is married and having 3 girl children, studying 8<sup>th</sup> class and 4<sup>th</sup> class and 1<sup>st</sup> standard respectively in native government school. He believes his illiteracy led him to this job, so he wants to make sure the good education opportunity for his children. He has developed habit of pan masala when he was in his village. Every day he consumes one pack pan masala, which he considers as relaxation at work. He works 5 months in Chennai and stays in his village for one month and comes back for work again. He is able to send home 18000 per month average.

### **CASE 2- Birhom, helper 18 year, old from Uthadinajpur, West Bengal**

Birhom is an active and studious boy, who landed in Chennai just a month ago. He has completed 10<sup>th</sup> standard. He is the only boy in the family and his father is having agricultural land. All his friends from neighbourhood had come to Chennai for work. Whenever they go

home for holidays, they spoke about the fun and freedom they experienced here. This peer influence led him to drop his studies and come to Chennai. Here he was working as, helper to the Masan. He expressed his difficulty to sleep in a small room with 14 of his roommates. Birhom says that 'he will get back to his place in one or two months and get enrolled his education further and he will never again come for this work'

### **Case 3- Rehman helper 18-year-old from Uthadinajpur, Westbengal**

This youngster from Uthadinajpurdistrict had come to Chennai 3 months before. His average income is Rs.12000 per month. He is happy being in Chennai along with his friends. All he aims currently is to purchase a particular brand of smart phone. He is a drop out from 10<sup>th</sup> standard. He says that 'I am not interested in studies, here no teacher is going to scold me or ask me do this or that. That is the biggest relief'.

### **CASE 4- Ajay Agent36-year-old from Kolkata, West Bengal**

He has studied 12th standard.15 years of his life he vows to Chennai and grew professionally as agent. He is fluent in Tamil and knows the dynamics of this place. He is married and having 2 daughters. He says that in his community women are not allowed to go to work, so bring family to Chennai and maintaining will be costly for him. He earns Rs.30,000-40,000 every month.

### **CASE 5- Humayan Shek Agent 34-year-oldMurshidabad, West Bengal**

Humayanis in Chennai for the past 18 years, he knows the Tamil language and culture. Under him there are about 35 migrants are working. He states that only based on reference and from known circle he will bring people to work here. If accident happens, or any other emergencies he is aware of the local resources. He agreed that the police personnels, building owners, local counsellor and panchayat president are always ready help him. He recalled the critical situation he handled in a recent accident death near Moolakadai. Money was mobilised and 1.5 lakh rupees spent to send the body to home land. He added that association helps to collect money from unpaid owners and also regulates the migrant workers.

**CASE 6- Takim Sk Masan 36 year old Murshidabad, West Bengal**

His education qualification is 4<sup>th</sup> standard. He is a married man migrated to Chennai before 11 years, leaving his 3 kids back in village. His son is in 10<sup>th</sup> class, first daughter in 8<sup>th</sup> class, 2<sup>nd</sup> daughter in 5<sup>th</sup> class respectively. He shuffles between Chennai and Murshidabad on and off. He has developed smoking habit when he started working. In his native his wage is Rs.750 and the payment may not be on time. He prefers to work in Chennai because of the assured weekly payment. He is able to send Rs. 22000 in a month. He often remembered his village Subhrnamirigi during the conversation in longing note. He is residing in the hut next to the construction area, thus he was not happy about the neighbouring building owners come and scold the migrants for the water logs that they have created.

**CASE 7 Sahb SK-35-year-old helper, Murshidabad, West Bengal**

He is married and having 2 kids. He preferred to be in his native, but when he is left with no scope to meet the livelihood, he travels to different states. He had come to Chennai a month ago, his migration pattern is not continuous.

**CASE 8-Abadul -36-year-old, Murshidabad West Bengal**

This family man with 4 kids came to Chennai 2 months before. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> time he had come to Chennai. Mostly he goes to Kerala for work. He recalled a worst experience recently faced. Due to food poison, he got dysentery. He could not avoid work and did not have toilet facility. He added that every day morning before sun rise, we go with a water bottle for open defecation.

**CASE 9 - Tusar- Masan- 21year old Uthadinajpur, West Bengal**

He is married and living as joint family. This is the first time he had come to Chennai. He aspires to construct a house in village and get his siblings married. He smiled saying 'discomforts are not to be considered for survival's sake'.

### **Case 10-Masidoor – agent – 25-year-old Murshidabad, West Bengal**

This unmarried youngster is working in Chennai for the past 7 years. He caught hold of the language and work techniques. Back in his native he went to graduation degree but discontinued and came to work. He told that ‘I had to leave my native because of agricultural failed us. My father was investing every penny in the land but at the end nothing will come as return. So, it was loss after loss. Also, to get a decent job I will have to pay huge amount as bribe.’ He was happy that he was able to give his father 2 lakh rupees to pay the debts.

### **OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS**

#### **Living Condition**

All the migrant workers are living in congested residents with many numbers of inmates. If the worker is staying in rented house are rooms, the room mates are generally more than 10. All the inmates share single bathroom and toilet. In some cases, there is no toilet or bathing facilities. Those who are staying in construction area are residing in temporary hut which is made to protect construction materials until the building work is over. These labourers keep their belonging in the hut, and sleep in the building which is under construction. They take bath in open place using the water pipes in the construction area and go for open defecation. In due course of time water logs near the tents becomes residence for mosquitos; need not emphasis on the impact of open defecation.

#### **Food Habits**

Every one contributes hundred rupees from their wage daily for the food expenses. They cook food on turns. Those who are living in tents near construction site are using fire wood for cooking and those who are residing in rented houses are using LPG stove. Every day, one dish is prepared for morning and afternoon; as they all eat breakfast and pack lunch to work. Generally, this dish is ‘subji’ vegetable curry made out of different vegetables and rice. Night every day they prepare chicken and in some days its egg curry. They get their tea or refreshments from the employer during work hours. On nutrition aspect, the menu they eat

every day is better comparing to their home in native. Due to time constrain, all the three meals in a day they eat rice, instead of roti.

### **RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL ADAPTATION**

Most of the migrant labourers in this location are Muslims. Every day they make sure to find time for regular prayer. During season of fasting, they maintain it on every day work schedule.

The agent is connected with the local political leaders in Chennai for social assistance; and he is also connected with the political leaders back in West Bengal. The migrant labourers are having association, which regulates the do's and don'ts for the migrants, safeguard their wellbeing. It also works as an advocacy body for the migrant workers. This association is connected with the political party in West Bengal. During election, by all means they get back to their home land to cast their vote.

### **ECONOMIC ASPECT**

The migrant workers are paid weekly by their contractors or employers. Masan gets about Rs.1000-1100 per day and helper is paid Rs.800. Out of which, they have to pay to the agent Rs.100 for identifying the work for them. On daily basis, Rs. 100 should be given for food. On an average, Masan will be able to send home every month Rs. 18000 to 20000 depending upon the number work available days. And helper will be able to send Rs.12000 to 15000 for a month. Migrant who are staying in rented place will be taken care by agent. Major accidents and medical emergencies also will be shared by the agent.

### **RECREATION AND ENTERTAINMENT**

Sunday is the holiday for the migrant workers. Whether they stay back in the residence or go for outing to nearby places. As everyone is having phone, that is the major recreation. In today's digital scenario maintaining social relationship is easy because of gadgets. Social, economic and political activities and information helps individuals to stay connected to their



social network. Maintaining social relationship has positive impact on the psychological wellbeing.

### **MEDICAL CARE**

No migrant has insurance. Most of the migrants do not know the ambulance number and hospital nearby. Only the agent knows the hospital details. Even if they know the details, for many reasons they avoid to go to hospital. Waiting time, long distance, language barrier, fear of judgement, inhibitions to approach the medical personal are some of them. So, mostly they go to the pharmacy nearby and get medicines directly. For construction workers, regular work is not assured, so even during sickness they go to work without taking rest.

Migration can be a complex and challenging process for the migrants. They will have to face cultural and language barriers. It might be difficult for them to even access basic services and social opportunities. Economic challenges like no work days, low wages, and lack of access to affordable housing and healthcare will put them at risk. Migrants may face discrimination and xenophobia in their new communities. Migrant are left alone in the new land with no familiar faces can lead to social isolation. Legal and administrative hurdles: Migrants may face legal and administrative hurdles in the hosting place. Separation from the loved ones can lead to Experiencing trauma and psychological distress. In spite of all the challenges, migrants show their resilience and adapt to the new social norms and culture. This adaptation helps them to earn the livelihood with harmony.

### **SUGGESTIONS**

- ❖ The government should take necessary steps to implement the existing legislations
- ❖ The government should formulate a comprehensive social security policy for these workers that should include food security, health security and security in old age.
- ❖ Migrant workers must be registered and be given identity cards

- ❖ Mobile toilets can be placed by local authorities where these type works are in progress
- ❖ Events like 'happy streets' can be organised where these population located in order to encourage inter cultural exchange

## **CONCLUSION**

Migration plays an important role in improving the economic and social conditions of people. The Indian Constitution assures its people the basic freedom to move to any part of the country, and the right to reside and earn a livelihood of their choice. but number of economic, social, cultural, political factors influence to move on. It is every one's role to give a comfortable stay for the migrants in the host land.

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## EMPHASISING RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND SOLUTIONS TO VIOLATION

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### ABSTRACT

*Freedom of religion is to be understood in threefold terms of Work, Worship and Knowledge. Work is a term to be understood as a constant and unceasing effort to help others and love everyone. Worship is consisting of prayer, praising and doing meditation while knowledge is to have sufficient understanding of God and his words in Holy Books. This paper is written with the focus on freedom of religion emphasizing right to freedom of religion and solutions to violation' as discussed by the researchers. This article deals with key aspects of the right to freedom of religion, violations of religious rights around the world, violations of religious rights in India, the issue in Manipur, glimpse of right to freedom of religion under the Indian constitution, probable solutions for the issues related to violation of right to religion in India, specific solutions for the issues related to violation of right to religion in India, concrete solutions for the issues related to violation of right to religion in India.*

**Key Words: Right, Freedom of Religion, Violation, Solutions, India**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The freedom of thought, conscience and freedom of religion are also known as right to freedom of religion and in India it is considered and recognized as a fundamental right and by the international law community. It encompasses the freedom to practice, choose, and change one's belief in God and religion. The freedom to express one religious ideas or belief in ones' practice, teaching, worship and observances. The right to freedom of religion is protected by various regional, national and international human right organizations and bodies such as International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) and many others. Many countries also have provisions protecting religious freedom in their national constitutions or the laws. In this article the discussed points are enumerated on key aspects of the right to freedom of religion, violations of religious rights around the world, violations of religious rights in India, the issue in Manipur, glimpse of right to religious freedom under the Indian Constitutions and to find a specific solutions and remedies for the violence and violations of human rights in various parts of India.

## **KEY ASPECTS OF THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF RELIGION**

There are five key aspects and features of the right to freedom of religion are enumerated as following and this could be extended also;

1. **Freedom of worship:** Individuals have the right to worship alone or with others, publicly or privately, according to their own religious practices. This includes the right to participate in religious ceremonies, rituals, and Observances.
2. **Freedom of expression:** The right to freedom of religion is also inclusive of one's freedom to express one's religious ideas on God and beliefs, either individually or collectively, through teaching, preaching, ways of worship, and the dissemination of religious materials.

3. **Non-discrimination:** This human right prohibits discrimination based on religion or belief. Everyone should be treated equally regardless of their religion or belief system.

4. **Freedom to change religion:** Individuals have the right to change their religion or belief system, or to adopt no religion at all. This right extends to the freedom to convert, as well as the freedom not to convert.

5. **Limitations:** While the right to freedom of religion is a fundamental right, it may be subject to certain restrictions and limitations. These limitations are typically based on the need to safeguard the public safety, health, order, nonviolation of the freedom of the others and rights. However, any restrictions on religious freedom should be necessary, proportionate, and prescribed by law.

It is important to note that the exercise of the right to freedom of religion should not infringe upon the rights and freedoms of others or justify any form of violence, discrimination, or harm. Balancing religious freedom with other competing rights and interests can sometimes be complex, and societies strive to find a balance that respects the diversity of beliefs while upholding human rights and ensuring social harmony.

## **VIOLATIONS OF RELIGIOUS RIGHTS AROUND THE WORLD**

There are always violations of religious rights around the world. Some real-life situations highlighting violations of the right to religious freedom are;

1. **Persecution of Uighur Muslims in China:** The Chinese government has been accused of engaging in widespread religious rights violations against Uighur Muslims in the Xinjiang region. Reports suggest that Uighur Muslims face arbitrary detention, forced labor, cultural assimilation, and restrictions on religious practices.

2. **Blasphemy Laws in Pakistan:** Pakistan's blasphemy laws have often been misused to target religious minorities, including Christians, Ahmadis, and Hindus. Accusations of blasphemy have led to arrests, mob violence, and even extrajudicial killings, infringing upon the right to freedom of religion or belief.

3. **Discrimination against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar:** The Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar has faced systemic discrimination, violence, and forced displacement. The Myanmar government's actions, including restrictions on religious practices and denial of citizenship, have violated the Rohingya's right to religious freedom.

4. **Attacks on Churches in Nigeria:** Christian communities in Nigeria have faced frequent attacks by extremist groups, resulting in the destruction of churches, displacement of believers, and loss of lives. These attacks infringe upon the right to religious freedom and security.

5. **Restrictions on Falun Gong in China:** The Chinese government has imposed severe restrictions on the spiritual practice of Falun Gong, leading to arrests, imprisonment, forced labor, and reports of torture. These actions violate the right to freedom of religion or belief.

6. **Discrimination against Dalits in India:** Dalits, who belong to the lowest caste in India's social hierarchy, often face religious discrimination and exclusion. They are denied access to places of worship, subjected to social segregation, and face violence for attempting to exercise their religious rights.

7. **Persecution of Baha'is in Iran:** Baha'is in Iran have long faced systematic persecution, including arrests, imprisonment, property confiscation, and denial of access to education and employment due to their religious beliefs.

## **VIOLATIONS OF RELIGIOUS RIGHTS IN INDIA**

India has faced a lot of situations of violations of religious rights. Some real-life situations regarding violations of the right to religious freedom in India are;

1. **Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi Dispute:** The long-standing dispute over the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi site in Ayodhya led to communal tensions and violence. The demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 by a mob resulted in religious rights violations and sparked widespread unrest.

2. **Attacks on Churches:** Incidents of attacks on churches and Christian communities have been reported in various parts of India. These attacks involve vandalism, destruction of property, and physical assaults on individuals, undermining the right to religious freedom.

3. **Forced Religious Conversions:** Reports of forced religious conversions have emerged, with some religious minority communities alleging coercion and pressure to convert to a different religion against their will. These instances infringe upon the right to freely practice one's religion.

4. **Mob Violence and Lynchings:** Instances of mob violence and lynchings have occurred based on religious identity, often targeting individuals from minority communities, particularly Muslims. These incidents result in loss of lives, harm to religious freedom, and create an atmosphere of fear and insecurity.

5. **Discrimination against Dalits:** Dalits, as a marginalized group, face discrimination and exclusion in various aspects, including religious practices. They often encounter barriers and social stigmatization, such as being denied entry into temples or facing unequal treatment during religious ceremonies.

6. **Anti-Sikh Riots:** The 1984 anti-Sikh riots following the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi saw targeted violence against the Sikh community. Sikh individuals and their places of worship were attacked, leading to widespread violations of religious rights.

7. **Communal Riots:** Communal riots, such as those in Gujarat in 2002 and Delhi in 2020, have resulted in violence, loss of lives, and destruction of property. These incidents fuel religious tensions and violate the right to religious freedom.

It is important to note that these incidents represent specific situations and do not reflect the entire religious landscape in India. While religious rights violations occur, India is also home to a diverse range of religious communities where individuals freely practice their faith. Addressing these violations requires promoting religious harmony, ensuring accountability for perpetrators, and fostering a culture of inclusivity and tolerance for all religious communities.

## **GLIMPSE OF RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF RELIGION UNDER THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION**

The provisions of the Indian Constitutions in part III, the religious freedom is given clearly. This freedom is explained in Articles 25, 26, 27 and 28 of the Constitution. These articles give freedom to every citizen to practice, preach, and propagate ones' religion. The Governor of Uttarakhand, Lt. Gen. (Retired) Gurmit Singh, approved the State's Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Act recently and passed the 'Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Act'. Articles of the Constitutions and Acts do promote peace, order, morality, health and well-being of all citizens irrespective of caste, creed and gender.

## **SOLUTIONS FOR VIOLATION OF RIGHT TO RELIGION IN INDIA**

The solutions to all forms violation is possible in the world to say at large in the universe. These solutions are enumerated as a result of discussion by the scholars and researchers.



**1. Probable Solutions for the Issues Related to Violation of Right to Religion in India** - The violation of the right to religion in India is a complex issue that requires careful consideration and a multi-faceted approach. While I can provide some general suggestions for addressing such violations, it's important to note that specific solutions may vary depending on the context and nature of the violations. Here are a few potential measures that can be considered:

➤ **Strengthening Legal Framework:** Enhancing and enforcing existing laws that protect the right to religion can be crucial. Ensuring that legislation is comprehensive, clear, and effectively implemented can help deter violations and hold perpetrators accountable.

➤ **Public Awareness and Education:** Promoting awareness about religious freedom and tolerance through educational initiatives, public campaigns, and community engagement can help foster a culture of respect and understanding among different religious communities.

➤ **Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation:** Encouraging dialogue and collaboration between religious leaders, organizations, and communities can foster mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation. Interfaith initiatives can help address misconceptions, stereotypes, and prejudices that contribute to religious intolerance.

➤ **Empowering Human Rights Institutions:** Strengthening and empowering human rights institutions, such as the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and State Human Rights Commissions (SHRCs), to effectively address religious rights violations, investigate complaints, and provide remedies can play a vital role in protecting and promoting religious freedom.

➤ **Government Accountability:** Ensuring that government officials and law enforcement agencies are held accountable for any failures or biases in dealing with

religious rights violations is essential. Establishing mechanisms for monitoring and reporting such violations can help identify areas where action is needed.

➤ **International Cooperation:** Engaging with international organizations and collaborating with other countries to share best practices and experiences in addressing religious freedom challenges can provide valuable insights and support for resolving these issues.

**2. Specific solutions for the issues related to violation of right to religion in India** - Specific solutions for addressing violations of the right to religion in India can be multi-faceted and context-dependent. Here are some specific measures that could be considered:

➤ **Legal Reforms:** Reviewing and amending laws that might infringe upon the right to religion, such as anti-conversion laws or laws targeting specific religious practices, to ensure they align with constitutional principles of freedom of religion and non-discrimination.

➤ **Swift and Fair Legal Proceedings:** Ensuring that cases involving religious rights violations are handled expeditiously and impartially through an efficient judicial system. This includes proper investigation, prosecution, and punishment of those responsible for perpetrating religiously motivated violence or discrimination.

➤ **Strengthening Institutions:** Strengthening the institutions responsible for protecting religious rights, such as the National Human Rights Commission and State Human Rights Commissions, to effectively address complaints and monitor violations. Ensuring these institutions have adequate resources, independence, and authority is crucial.

➤ **Empowering National Integration Council:** Activating and empowering the National Integration Council to promote communal harmony, address religious conflicts, and foster interfaith dialogue.

➤ **Promoting Social Cohesion:** Encouraging initiatives that promote social cohesion and religious harmony, such as interfaith dialogues, cultural exchange programs, and community activities, to bridge divides and foster mutual understanding and respect.

➤ **Sensitization of Law Enforcement:** Conducting regular training programs for law enforcement agencies to sensitize them about the importance of protecting religious rights and ensuring their impartiality in handling cases related to religious violence or discrimination.

➤ **Strengthening Education:** Introducing comprehensive educational programs that promote religious tolerance, understanding, and respect from an early age. This includes revising curricula to include teachings about various religions, their beliefs, and practices, and promoting values of secularism and inclusivity.

➤ **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Launching public awareness campaigns to educate the general public about the importance of religious freedom, dispel myths and misconceptions, and foster a culture of respect for religious diversity.

➤ **International Engagement:** Engaging with international bodies, such as the United Nations and regional organizations, to exchange best practices, seek support, and learn from experiences of other countries in promoting and protecting religious rights.

➤ **Empowering Civil Society:** Supporting and collaborating with civil society organizations that work towards protecting religious rights, providing legal aid to victims, monitoring and documenting violations, and advocating for policy changes.

**3. Concrete solutions for the issues related to violation of right to religion in India** - Concrete solutions for addressing violations of the right to religion in India require a comprehensive approach involving legal, social, and institutional changes. Here are some concrete solutions that could be considered:

✓ **Legal Reforms:** (i) Review and repeal or amend laws that may infringe upon the right to religion, such as anti-conversion laws, to ensure they align with constitutional principles of freedom of religion and non-discrimination. (ii) Strengthen laws and provisions that protect religious minorities from discrimination, hate crimes, and violence. (iii) Ensure strict enforcement of existing laws against perpetrators of religious violence or discrimination.

✓ **Effective Implementation and Enforcement:** (i) Establish special courts or fast-track mechanisms to expedite cases related to religious rights violations. (ii) Strengthen law enforcement agencies' capacity to promptly and effectively respond to incidents of religious violence or discrimination. (iii) Ensure proper training for police officers, prosecutors, and judges on religious rights issues and sensitization towards different religious beliefs and practices.

✓ **Empowering National and State Human Rights Commissions:** (i) Strengthen the National Human Rights Commission and State Human Rights Commissions to effectively investigate complaints of religious rights violations and ensure their recommendations are acted upon. (ii) Provide adequate resources, independence, and authority to these institutions to carry out their mandate effectively.

✓ **Interfaith Dialogue and Reconciliation:** (i) promote interfaith dialogue initiatives at various levels, bringing together religious leaders, community representatives, and civil society organizations to foster understanding, respect, and reconciliation. (ii) Encourage interfaith activities and events that promote shared values, cultural exchange, and cooperation among different religious communities.

✓ **Education and Awareness:** (i) Revise educational curricula to include comprehensive teachings about various religions, their beliefs, and practices, promoting tolerance, understanding, and respect for diversity. (ii) Conduct awareness campaigns in schools, colleges, and communities to promote religious harmony, combat stereotypes, and foster a culture of inclusivity.

✓ **Community Outreach and Mediation:** (i) Establish community outreach programs to engage religious leaders, community elders, and influential figures in promoting peaceful coexistence and resolving religious conflicts through dialogue and mediation. (ii) Encourage local-level initiatives that bring together different religious communities for collaborative projects, cultural celebrations, and joint social initiatives.

✓ **International Cooperation:** (i) Engage with international human rights bodies, organizations, and peer countries to exchange best practices, seek support, and learn from their experiences in promoting and protecting religious rights. (ii) Collaborate with international bodies and organizations to monitor and report on religious rights violations in India, ensuring transparency and accountability.

✓ **Empowering Civil Society Organizations:** (i) Provide financial support, capacity-building, and legal aid to civil society organizations working on promoting and protecting religious rights. (ii) Facilitate their participation in policy discussions, consultations, and awareness campaigns.

## **CONCLUSION**

It's important to emphasize that these are general suggestions, and the specific approach and solutions may vary based on the nature and context of the religious rights violations. Consulting with legal experts, human rights organizations, and stakeholders from various religious communities can help in formulating more tailored and effective strategies to address the specific issues at hand. These are some specific solutions that can be considered to address violations of the right to religion in India.

However, it is important to involve relevant stakeholders, including religious leaders, civil society organizations, and affected communities, in developing and implementing these solutions to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability. It's important to acknowledge these concrete solutions need to be implemented properly in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, involving religious leaders, civil society organizations, legal experts, and affected communities to safeguard their effective ways of living with the idea of inclusiveness. Swami

Vivekananda said that everyone's supreme duty and responsibility is to advance towards freedom in all aspects in a special way Mental, Physical and Spiritual manner and thus to help others to do in the same manner.

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## **THE IMPACT OF EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC SCHEMES RESERVED BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE DALIT WOMEN IN TAMIL NADU**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Dalits in Indian society have endlessly suffered because of the stigma given to them. Dalits are being socially oppressed for centuries, economically depressed, politically marginalized, prevented from education, banned from certain occupations, suffered under extreme poverty, and degraded in society to the extreme lowest sections. Dalit women suffered a lot in association with Men. Many educational and economic schemes were carried out over the years to recover the social status of Dalit women in Tamil Nadu. The social position of Dalit women will vary from place to place depending on numerous factors such as their education, career, family, society, and region. Tamil Nadu is one of the pioneering states in India that implemented educational and economic measures to improve the lives of Dalit women. It has brought many modifications to their lives. However, it has not been successful in ensuring centum economic security for Dalit women. The sufferings of Dalit women are not fully wiped out by the efforts taken by the government. This research paper aims to critically analyse and highlight the educational and economic schemes implemented by the government and their impact on the lives of Dalit women. Thus, the paper concentrates on the educational and economic status of Dalit women in Tamil Nadu. The researcher has used descriptive and analytical methodology.*

**Keywords:** Dalit Women, Education, Economic Status, Government Schemes, Tamil Nadu.

## **INTRODUCTION**

‘Dalit’ is the word that means ‘oppressed’ or ‘untouchable’ in Sanskrit denoting the community belonging to the lowest caste in India. The people belonging to this community are poor and are oppressed by other upper-caste communities. They suffer a lot for their daily survival. Dalits in ancient times were prevented from public spaces because of untouchability. They became the victims of such cruel practices. Dalits were prohibited from entering the temple, were not allowed to wear slippers, and were denied basic needs such as drinking water, proper food, etc. One could notice changes in the austere behaviour towards the Dalits especially, after the post-independence. While open discrimination and untouchability reduced over the last few decades, Dalits remain an oppressed community.

“The Progress of the Dalit Community should be measured in terms of the progress made by its womenfolk.” (Ambedkar) Dalit women are the most marginalized ones around the globe. Dalit women in India face multiple marginalization based on their caste, class, and gender. Born in a Dalit community, they are marginalized. Being women, they are marginalized. Finally, they are marginalized based on their lower class. Thus Dalit women in comparison to Dalit men suffer multiple marginalization. They face severe exclusion in the political, social, and economic world. They have no priority in the political scenario, are not accepted in society and economically they have no hold of anything.

According to the constitution of India, all Indians have the fundamental right to education (Article 21-A), the right to own land (Article 19(1)(f)), the right to live a standard life in society (Article -21), the right to express themselves (Article 19(1)(a), and the right to make decisions (Article- 21), etc. Dalits/Scheduled castes are the group of people who have the least access to these rights or are barred from accessing them. Discrimination among the castes still exists and more over gender discrimination is predominant in India. It is against this backdrop the research scholar is trying to focus on the educational, social, and financial status of the Dalit women in Tamil Nadu.



The Indian government soon after the independence launched many schemes and programmes for the empowerment of the Dalit community. The sole aim of these schemes was to uplift the Dalits in our country by promoting education and raising their economic status thus improving their social lives. This paper focuses on the various educational and economic schemes set apart by the government to promote the education and livelihood of the Dalits and in particular for the Dalit women. But we witness these schemes have not entirely helped them to make a standard life in society.

Therefore, the researcher through this paper is evaluating the government schemes preserved for the Dalits and in particular for the Dalit women. It also evaluates the way these government schemes are implemented. The researcher also evaluates the educational impact of these schemes to improve the livelihood of Dalit women. Educational and social status go hand in hand. Proper education will improve the living condition of the individual and it will be reflected in their advanced social status.

### **AIM OF THE STUDY**

This paper aims to evaluate the various economic schemes conserved for the education of the Dalit and in particular for the Dalit women in Tamil Nadu by the central and state government and the way it makes an impact on their social lives.

### **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

- 1) To know several social and economic rights of the Dalit Women from the constitution of India.
- 2) To study the educational and economic schemes reserved for the Dalits
- 3) To analyse the difficulties in implementing economic schemes.
- 4) To evaluate the impact of these economic schemes on Dalit Women.
- 5) To verify the various challenges encountered by the Dalit women in accessing these schemes.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- ❖ What are the specific educational and economic schemes reserved by the government for the Dalit women in Tamil Nadu?
- ❖ Do these schemes benefit the Dalit women in Tamil Nadu?
- ❖ What is the progress brought out by these schemes?
- ❖ How far have these schemes helped Dalit women improve their social lives?

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The researcher has adopted the Descriptive method for this paper. The secondary sources of data are used from published journals, articles, and government bulletins. The budget allocation under various schemes the economic survey made among the Dalits and the relevant research articles are studied for a deeper knowledge of the problem.

## **DALIT WOMEN IN THE PATRIARCHAL INDIAN SOCIETY**

In a male-dominated culture, Dalit women undergo multiple oppression like caste discrimination, class discrimination, and gender discrimination which they can never escape. The Vedic scripture and *Manusmriti* prevent Dalit women from empowering their lives in society through economic, political, social, educational, and personal channels. Even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century witness severe oppression and exploitation imposed on Dalit women. They are the most deprived section of society. They are being denied the fundamental constitutional rights.

Economic rights most often are denied to the Dalit women causing a great inequality and oppression of this section. “Economic stability increases an individual’s options and choices in life. Economic empowerment puts women in a stronger position and gives them the power to participate, together with men, in the shaping of society, to influence development at all levels of society, and to make decisions that promote their families and their well-being.

Economic empowerment of women is a matter of human rights and social justice.” (Tornqvist and Schmitz, 2009).

## **DALIT WOMEN IN TAMIL NADU**

According to the Population Census report made in 2001 in Tamil Nadu, the share of Scheduled Caste (SC) population is 1.19 crore. 70 percent of the scheduled castes live in rural areas. The sex ratio among the SCs is 999/1000 which is rather high in comparison to the ratio of Scheduled Tribe (ST) and general. Dalit women in Tamil Nadu numbered 59,245,79 according to the Census made in 2001 constitute a large section of the population that is 9.49% of the State population, 19.11% of the State women population, and 49.96% of the State Dalit population.

The caste system, untouchability, and gender discrimination have seriously affected the social status of Dalit women in Tamil Nadu. Although untouchability was outlawed in India soon after independence, the caste system exists in several parts of the country in its variant forms. It remains a major part of the social structure. Dalits are legally recognized as a community of people who fit into the Scheduled Caste (SC). The women belonging to this Dalit community face a lot of discrimination, exclusion, rejection, and restriction in their place of work, prevented freedom from exercising political, and social benefits, murder, sexual abuse, physical violence, trafficking, and early marriage.

The caste segregation pulls down the Dalit women to the lowest position within the social structure. The discrimination would take place in different forms such as preventing access to certain public places such as religious functions, common functions, and educational institutions, denial of constitutional rights such as deciding on one’s marriage, occupation, unequal wages based on gender disparity, and denying proper medications. This subjugation of the Dalit women causes severe economic oppression among the Dalit women. They need to depend on the men for each and everything and they live in utter poverty all through their lives. It is for this very reason some economic measures planned by the government to eradicate

poverty in the lives of Dalits. Women are often limited to the household work. The social system and the gender-based traditional rules restrict Dalit women from accessing proper education, skill development, and employment opportunities outside their homes.

## **CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS FOR DALITS**

The Indian constitution equally distributes human rights to all the citizens of India irrespective of their caste, class, gender, and faith. The Dalits in our country also have the same rights as any other citizens of the country. They have an equal right to live, the right to equality, the right to education, the right to speech, and expression, the right to employment, and a right to live with dignity.

The caste system, class system, and gender bias oppress the Dalit women and prevent them from exercising their basic human rights. Indian constitution articles 341 and 342 recognize those communities who suffered from the age-old practice of untouchability. The Scheduled castes who are subjected to multiple isolation need special consideration for safeguarding their interests.

Article 46 of the Indian Constitution promotes the educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other weaker sections of society and seeks to protect them from social injustice and exploitation. Articles 14 and 15 guarantee the citizens of India equality in all aspects. According to these articles, every person in the country must be treated equally in the eyes of the law and it's the right to equality. Article 16 speaks of the SC and their access to educational institutions, employment, and other socio-economic benefits. Article 21-A in the Constitution of India provides free and compulsory education for all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right. Article 19 of the Indian constitution provides the right to freedom of speech and freedom of choosing their profession. Article 21 grants personal liberty for all regardless of their caste to live a dignified life.

## **EDUCATIONAL SCHEMES FOR THE DALITS**

Education can make a huge transformation in the lives of anybody. As a step to promote education among the Dalits, the government has introduced certain educational and economic schemes for them. The government has preserved educational scholarships but the majority of Dalit girl children are not permitted to make use of this opportunity. The family feels educating their daughters is adding expenses to them at the time of their marriage. It is just a customary belief based on gender that higher education is not necessary for Dalit women. They think that investing money in educating a girl child will demand more money during their marriage. It is not going to bring an income for their family. They are ignorant of the value of education and how it could be the best investment for an individual.

The government of India understood many of the scheduled castes' children do not go to school because of their poor economic background. Being aware of this situation the central government has set apart various educational scholarships for the Scheduled Caste to ensure education is not denied to them due to their poor financial status. Scholarships are given for Pre-metric, post-metric, and for obtaining higher studies in India and abroad. These are some of the scholarships given by the central government to promote education for these students all over the country including both boys and girls. The central government implements these scholarship programs for the Scheduled Caste students through the state governments.

**Table 1- Educational Schemes by the Government**

<b>Sl. No</b>	<b>Scholarship</b>	<b>Objectives</b>
1.	Pre- Matric Scholarship for Scheduled Caste Students	To support the family of SC children in educating their children.
2.	Post Matric Scholarship for Scheduled Caste Students	To increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio of SC students in higher education focusing on the poorest households.

		To grant financial assistance at the post-matriculation level.
3.	Central Sector Scholarship of Top-Class Education for Scheduled Caste Students	To recognize and promote quality education among SC students pursuing studies beyond class 12 <sup>th</sup> and to grant economic support.
4.	National Fellowship for Scheduled Caste Students	To provide opportunities to Scheduled Castes students to continue higher education: M.Phil/Ph.D degrees in Sciences, Humanities and Social Science streams.
5.	National Overseas Scholarship	To facilitate the students to obtain higher education like Master's degree or Ph.D. courses by studying abroad.
6.	Free Coaching Scheme for SC and OBC Students	To provide good quality training for SC and OBC candidates. To enable them for competitive examinations. To secure admission to reputed technical and professional higher education institutions.
7.	Upgradation Of Merit Of SC Students	To upgrade the merit of SC students To provide them with remedial and special coaching in classes IX to XII.
8.	Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojana	To construct hostels for SC students who live in rural areas to encourage their education.
9.	Educational loans from the National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation	To support with financial assistance in pursuing full-time Professional/Technical courses.
10.	Educational loans from the National Safai Karamcharis Finance & Development Corporation	To help the students from the community of Safai Karamcharis or Manual Scavengers and their dependents pursue higher education.

(Source - The author has created the table)

## **ECONOMIC SCHEMES FOR DALIT WOMEN**

The year 2001 was declared as Women's Empowerment Year by the Indian government focusing on the empowerment of the women in our country. The main objective of observing the year as Women Empowerment Year was to make a large-scale awareness of women's various rights to focus on their issues and make a change in their lives. The government has launched some economic schemes to ensure the provision of training, employment, and income-generation activities to make all Dalit women economically independent and self-reliant.

Financial schemes for the economic empowerment of Dalits in India include: -

- ❖ National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation is meant to finance certain income-generating activities for Scheduled Castes who are below the poverty line limits.
- ❖ National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation to provide credit facilities to beneficiaries.
- ❖ Special Central Assistance to Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan to support scheduled caste families in increasing their productivity and income.
- ❖ Self-Employment Programmes to provide self-employment for educated unemployed people. In this programme, 50 percent of the benefit was for Scheduled Castes.
- ❖ Wage Employment Programmes for the development of rural areas. Infrastructure like roads to connect the village to different areas, which made the village more accessible, and also other social, and educational schools and infrastructure like hospitals.
- ❖ Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana for the integrated development of Scheduled Castes
- ❖ Indira Awas Yojana is providing financial assistance for making houses to the BPL rural households belonging to Scheduled Castes.

## **STATE GOVERNMENT - TAMIL NADU**

The state government of Tamil Nadu has been taking many specific steps to empower the women of the state. The government has focused on education, gender equality in the participation in the governance, health, and nutrition of women, equal rights, eradicating gender bias and discrimination in occupation, and taking action against the violence caused upon women.

Tamil Nadu Adi Dravidar Tribal Welfare Department exhibits economic funds with the objectives of ensuring the socio-economic and educational improvement of the Dalits.

- Various programmes are carried out such as infrastructure facilities, drinking water, roads to link, house sites, housing, schools, hostels, health centres, community halls, and so on.
- The government educational institution is provided with breakfast, mid-day meals, and many more to promote compulsory education. various types of educational grants and scholarships are given to all Dalits and in particular for Dalit girl children.
- Educational accessories like school bags, uniforms, textbooks, pens, bags, laptops, etc. are given by the government under various schemes.
- To facilitate transportation, they are freely provided with bicycles, two-wheelers, and free bus pass for the girl children. Many scholarships are announced in the state.
- Mobiles and laptops are provided to students going for higher education.
- During every five-year plan, the government allocates funds for educational schemes for marginalized groups to promote education among them.
- Special scholarships and fellowships, mid-day meals, uniforms stationery items, books, and textbooks are given to the children belonging to the Dalit groups to boost them for the upper level of education.
- Residential middle schools called Ashram schools were made and reservations were given for the Dalits.



## **CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING ECONOMIC SCHEMES FOR DALIT WOMEN**

When any economic policy is implemented for women, Dalit women face a lot of limitations in accessing it as they go through multiple forms of discrimination. Dalit women face a lot of barriers in receiving the schemes given by the government which their counterparts, the upper caste women do not experience in receiving these schemes. Economic rights are the major area where Dalit women are being abandoned.

Even though the government has implemented several orders and reservations of seats for Dalits for their higher studies, only a few are reaching that level of higher education. The discrimination the students face at their primary and school levels prevents them from utilizing these benefits and going for higher education. They are easily dropped out because of their experience. The excellence in education in government schools is very poor in comparison to private schools. Dalit parents are unable to send their children to private schools due to financial issues. The educational assistance given by the government is not sufficient to send their children to the private institutions.

The government opened many ashram schools, that is residential schools, and gave preference for the Dalit students but many parents hesitated to send their children to the ashram schools because of the poor educational quality, lack of infrastructural facilities, and distance of the school from the home which leads to an increased number of dropouts.

Dalit women face another form of rejection at job interviews. They are being questioned about their surnames during the job interview whereas, non-Dalits are never been asked this question. The reservations given to the Dalits are denied for them on many occasions at the time of implementing it. Dalit girl children are prevented from obtaining student scholarships based on their religion and faith. The Tamil Nadu government is not willing to extend the scholarships meant for the Dalit students who converted to Christianity. Ilamurugu said to the Times of India, “When Dalits get converted to Christianity, they become OBCs and they have 30% reservation. If they extend benefits under the post-metric scholarship scheme, they have

chances of availing benefits under the OBC reservation too and so the state government should strictly restrict the benefits only to SC students.” (Yazhinian - 2023).

The government has provided multiple economic schemes to promote education to improve the social life of the Dalits, they criticize these educational schemes have poor implementation and therefore, it is not catering to the purpose of its real motivation. The scholarships are provided not on time sometimes it is delayed and corruption is also taking place while distributing educational funds. Students who are going to private schools find difficulty in accommodating to the new culture. They face discrimination from the authorities, teachers, and peer groups. The medium of instruction becomes another reason in the initial days and some find it hard to adapt to the situation.

Some parents are unaware of the government schemes given for the support of education. They still don't send their children to school because of their financial issues. They are not aware of the transportation facilities and also they reveal the limitation of the schemes which is the unavailability of free transportation facilities for male children and are limited to one child from a family. Only a few percent of parents make use of the free hostel facilities by sending their children to the hostels for study.

The incentives given for all the students who passed the higher education are limited these years to those who score higher marks in board examinations. Thus the beneficial status of the incentives and awards is reduced to a great extent. Many of the students who study in private schools are denied the support of the government provisions for educational schemes for it applies to the students who are studying in government schools. The Scheduled Caste students at times do not get scholarship amounts.

## **OUTCOME, FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

The government's educational and economic schemes had a positive outcome. Those schemes have helped many Dalit women to empower themselves. It has made them to make a

livelihood for themselves. It has improved the educational, social, and economic lives of many Dalit women. These schemes have helped the Dalit women to make a difference in their lives to a certain extent but many still live in pain and suppression. The women in the state lack economic assistance to make a proper livelihood for themselves.

- The educational and social empowerment of the Dalits is possible only through proper and higher education.
- Most of the Dalits stay in rural areas where they do not get much facility for education. They need to walk very far to reach school. It prevents them from going to school daily. Lack of transportation to the areas where Dalits are dwelling.
- The literacy rate of the Dalits especially Dalit girls is still behind the expected level even after the government has provided certain economic support for their educational upliftment.
- To improve the employability among the Dalit women to raise the standard of their lives, employment skills training can be made available for them.
- The Dalit Women should be given more opportunities to focus on various skills which will cater to their economic needs.
- Employment skills are not dependent on the completion of higher education therefore, this training can benefit many Dalit women who lost the opportunity to go for higher level education.
- Successful vocational training programmes enable individuals to prepare themselves for any job.
- The economic status of their family needs to be settled. Still, some Dalit women experience similar barriers in accessing employment skills training as they struggle to access higher education.

Manu Alphonse, the research project director on “Tracking Budget with intersectionality framework for an Evolution of Gender Responsive Budget for Dalit Women in Tamilnadu” carried out in 2013 in Tamil Nadu writes in this final report, “Tamilnadu State Schemes & Dalit

Women - Gaps and Concerns”, clearly shows, existing schemes are hardly ever based on real needs and capabilities of Dalit women and hence prove ineffective. An effort towards intersectional budgeting for Dalit women should keep these concerns in focus!

## **CONCLUSION**

Caste discrimination is an age-old practice that dehumanizes people. Even in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, it still exists in its rigid forms. It is the cruel form of discrimination that continues to be practiced in various parts of our country. Dalit women continue to suffer discrimination and social exclusion. Dalit women have been deeply afflicted and wounded in recent times. They face discrimination not only for their gender but also because of religious, social, and cultural structures. Dalit women are placed in the lowest position in the hierarchy.

The various educational and Economic schemes introduced by the government for the Scheduled caste communities were to promote and provide educational opportunities for the children belonging to this community regardless of their gender had a certain positive impact on their lives. Many Dalits including women made use of this opportunity and came up in their lives. However, due to various reasons such as untouchability, remoteness of their dwellings, and lack of awareness of the government schemes some Dalit children did not make use of these opportunities. The literacy rates of the Dalit community are still behind the expected level. Education is the only means of achieving economic and social comfort for the backward classes in the coming generation.

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