



Rashtra Mahila

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Editor's Column

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

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

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

Since those early years, the International Women's Day has assumed a new dimension for women in developed and developing countries alike. The growing international women's movement, which has been strengthened by global United Nations Women's

Conference has helped to make the commemoration a rallying point for coordinated efforts to demand women's rights and participation in the political and economic processes. Increasingly, the International Women's Day, is a time to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women, who have played an extraordinary role in the history of women's rights.

FOCUS

International Women's Day

Thus, where once women fought to put gender equality on the international agenda, gender equality is now one of the primary factors shaping that agenda. In many countries, provisions guaranteeing enjoyment of human rights without discrimination on the basis of sex have been included in Constitutions or integrated into legislative reforms. Discriminatory legal provisions have been repealed and legal literacy and other measures introduced to alert women to their rights.

Yet, much remains to be done. More than 69 years after independence, despite plethora of laws, women in India still find themselves shackled. Poverty of

women, especially, heads of households, appears to be deepening. Women are over represented among the unemployed. Though women make up nearly half the population, they account for only quarter of workers employed. They still continue to pay with their lives for child marriage, domestic violence, dowry demands, foeticide, rapes and inadequate provisions of healthcare.

The situation is alarming and calls for urging matching interventions. We have to put more of our girl children in schools and equip them with quality education – as opposed to making them merely literates. We have to make primary health centres accessible to women so that hundreds of women in rural areas do not die every year during childbirth for want of medical attention. And most importantly, we have to reform property laws so that gender parity becomes a reality. While these changes are necessary, they will amount to nothing, if we, as a society, continue to deny our women, the dignity, liberty and opportunities that are rightfully theirs. For when women thrive, the whole of society benefits and succeeding generations are given a better start in life.

Making a difference

In order to eradicate the social evil of dowry, particularly, plaguing the poor, the Muslim community in Jharkhand's Palamu region is returning dowry amounts the families had taken during their sons' weddings. Over the last one year, around 800 families in Latehar and Palamu districts have returned Rs. 6 crore in cash to the bride's families. The 'Maulvis', too, have resolved not to solemnise 'Nikah' where any exchange of dowry is involved. Currently, marriages are being solemnized without any exchange of money.

Consultation on 'Review of Child Care Leave'

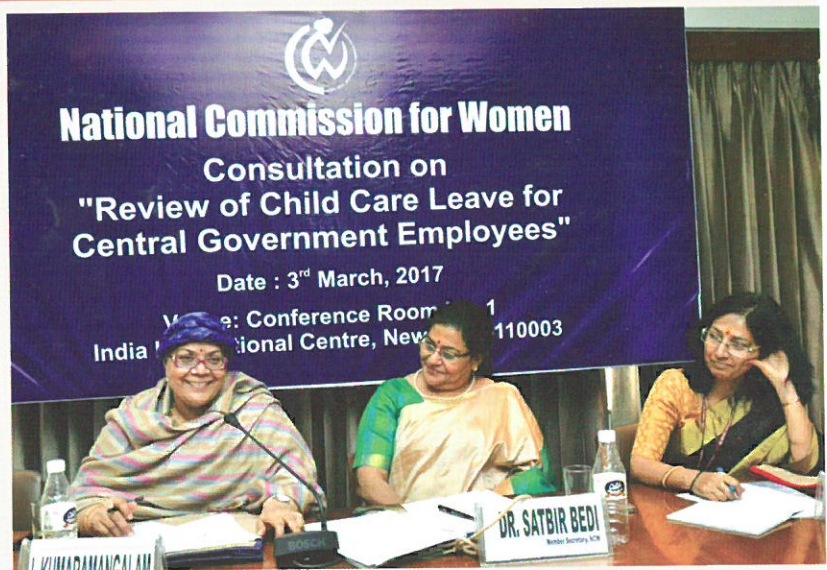
The National Commission for Women organized a consultation on 3rd March, 2017 on Child Care Leave (CCL) for Central Government employees with a view to adopting a gender-neutral approach with regard to child care leave based on the premise that it should be extended to both the parents so that each one can take leave to share childcare responsibilities. The consultation was chaired by NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam.

Representatives from various ministries – DOPT, Cabinet Secretariat, Ministry of Finance, Law & Justice, CAG, Health & Family Welfare, Railways, Telecommunications, as well as legal experts and representatives from the civil society organizations participated in the consultation.

The following aspects were deliberated upon in order to draw conclusions on the subject : (1) Whether childcare is the responsibility of both parents? (2) Whether CCL be made available to male employees? (3) If yes, defining strategies for the same and deciding duration of CCL for each parent. (4) Should CCL be made available to males in addition to females or the existing framework be applied equally to both parents?

Speaking on the occasion, NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam dwelt on the traditional gender roles and how even today the idea of gender equity provisions remain unimplemented. Drawing comparisons with Norwegian countries, she said in those countries, such leave is non-transferable among the couples. She said equal division of work between men and women also fosters paternal involvement in child care.

The discussion concluded with the following recommendations : (1) Child Care leave may be applicable to both parents equally. (2) The existing framework of 2 years that is 730 days of leave be shared between the parents. (3) The entitlement should be extended to private as well as formal and informal sectors of employment. (4) Creche facilities be made available in the workplace. (5) Leave for a stipulated time period be mandatory for male employees.



At the Consultation (from left) NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam, Member Secretary Dr. Satbir Bedi, Joint Secretary Vandana Gupta

Securing Rights of Women Farmers

A consultation on "Securing rights of women farmers; Developing a Roadmap for Action" was organized by Mahila Kisan Aadhikar Manch in association with NCW and UN Women in Guwahati. The subjects discussed were: 1. Recognition of Women Farmers; 2. Entitlement of Land Rights; 3. Displacement policies; 4. Training of latest technologies; & 5. Processing, packaging, cold storage & marketing.

The consultation was attended by women farmers' representatives from Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur as well as representatives from the government.

Legal Awareness Programme

Two Legal Awareness Programmes were organized at District Khowai and Damcherra in Tripura from 8th to 11th March, 2017, respectively. NCW took suo motu cognizance of 15 cases between 25th February and 20th March, 2017.

Jan Sunwai

❖ The National Commission for Women held a Mahila Jan Sunwai on 1st and 2nd March, 2017 at the Mumbai Police Club. NCW Member Alok Rawat along with Ms. Geeta Rathee, JTE (Legal), conducted the Jan Sunwai in collaboration with District Legal Services Authority and police officials. At the Sunwai, 112 cases were taken up; out of which 98 cases were disposed of and for the remaining cases, police officials were directed to take remedial action.

❖ Member Sushma Sahu along with Counsellor Varun Chhabra and Ranjani Raman, JTE, conducted a Mahila Jan Sunwai at Faridabad in Haryana from 1st to 2nd



Member Sushma Sahu talking to a complainant

❖ Member Rekha Sharma along with Counsellor Parveen Singh visited Bangalore to attend a 2-day Mahila Jan Sunwai. At the Jan Sunwai, 95 cases were taken up; out of which 85 cases were disposed of. For the remaining 5 cases, the police were directed to take speedy action. Later, the Member met Karnataka DGP and discussed a few cases which needed his intervention and directions.



At the Jan Sunwai, Member Alok Rawat (centre), Ms. Geeta Rathee is on his left. (Below) A view of the complainants.

March, 2017. At the Jan Sunwai, 90 cases were taken up; out of which 70 cases were disposed of.



At the Jan Sunwai (from left) DCP Crime Branch, Addl. Commissioner of Police East, Member Rekha Sharma, Mr. Parveen Singh

Important Decisions

- The Supreme Court ruled that “isolated incidents of cruelty, alleged to have occurred eight to ten years prior to filing of a petition cannot furnish a subsisting cause of action to seek divorce after ten years or so of occurrence of such incidents.” A marriage could be dissolved only if such incidents were of a recurring nature. Setting aside the divorce order granted by a Family Court to the husband, the apex court allowed the plea of the wife for restitution of conjugal rights.
- A Delhi court has held that a widow has a right to enjoy the property purchased by her husband in her name and her daughter and son-in-law cannot lay claim over it. The court asked the couple to vacate the house within six months. As the daughter and son-in-law only had “permissive possession” of the house, they were asked to pay Rs. 10,000/- per month to the widow from the time of institution of the suit in 2014 and the like amount from the date of the judgment till the handing over of the possession of the house, with interest.

Members' Visits

❖ Member Rekha Sharma attended a National Seminar on Women Empowerment, organized by the Haryana Police at Panchkula and addressed the police officials on gender sensitization. ● Ms. Sharma visited the Mizoram Central Jail to examine the condition of women inmates. She found that the facilities provided to the inmates were quite inadequate and recommended that undertrials should be provided separate accommodation as well as proper medical facilities, skill training and special diet for children. Later, she visited the Crimes against Women Cell and found that women police comprised only 3% of the police force. ● The Member also visited the Mizoram State Commission for Women and interacted with the Chairperson, Members and representatives of NGOs. Later, she visited the Women Protection Home and Swadhar Home. ● The Member met DGP and Chief Secretary of Mizoram and discussed about rising POSCO cases in the State as well as issues relating to the low percentage of women officials and inadequate facilities provided to them. In her meeting with the Chief Secretary, the Member discussed the problems faced by women inmates of jails, protection homes and Swadhar Home. ● She also met the Chief Minister of Mizoram and discussed with him problems faced by jail inmates, women police officers and lack of opportunities for women to enter the political arena. ● The Member took 8 hearings between 20th February and 21st March, 2017 and around 20 fresh cases were taken up during the hearings.

❖ Member Sushma Sahu accompanied by NCPCR Member, Yashwant Jain, JTE Sukham Giran and NCPCR Consultant, Vinay Singh enquired into a media report pertaining to incidents of suicide committed by 6 school-going girls in Sidhi District of Madhya Pradesh over a period of 3 months. According to the media reports, no suicide note was available and neither the girls were suffering from depression. ● The Member attended the International Women's Day Celebrations at BIA Patna and Army Cantt. Danapur in Bihar from 6th to 8th March, 2017. ● Ms. Sahu also attended a one-day workshop at Saharsa in Bihar on Women's Entrepreneurship and Skill Development.

News from abroad

- In a landmark development, a Bill to regulate marriages of minority Hindus in Pakistan became a law after the President of Pakistan gave his approval. Now Pakistan's Hindus have got an exclusive personal law to regulate marriages which will help Hindu women get documentary proof of their marriage, which is needed while applying for passports and other official documents. The Bill provides a mechanism for registering Hindu marriages, conditions for contracting a marriage, and the procedures and grounds for dissolving a marriage.
- The United Kingdom is overhauling its laws to allow alleged rape survivors to pre-record their evidence and spare them from cross-examination in open courts, which may lead to a higher level of 'early guilty pleas'. The UK Justice Secretary said, "It reduces the level of trauma for the victim and will give them confidence to come forward." Under the rules, the survivors would be able to give evidence in a room in the court, where it is less intimidating, where there are ground rules set by the judge. Judges will be able to limit the length of cross-examination during such testimony to avoid survivors having to testify for days and will determine the types of questions that can be asked. Moreover, if a question is asked that is inadmissible, that can be cut out of the tape.

Do you know?

According to Monster Salary Index on gender for 2016, women in India earn 25% less than men, proving that gender continues to be a significant parameter in determining salaries in the country.

for further information visit our website at : www.ncw.nic.in

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