

Chapter – 4

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

In this chapter, you learn about the following:

- Problem of child labour – meaning, effects, constitutional provisions
- Violence on women
- Dowry – nature, consequences and measures to remove it
- Female foeticide

As society becomes more and more complex, the innumerable managerial conflicts sometimes weaken individuals and organizations and push them towards exploitation. These conflicts get expressed as social exploitation and problems of that time. There are some social problems which are the product of modernity! You will get to know about some of them here.

The societies of developing countries like India are afflicted with many problems. For e.g. excessive population, poverty, unemployment, beggary, juvenile delinquency, crimes, problem of child labour, corruption, exploitation of women, dowry harassment, disturbed youth etc.

Let us get to know about a few of such social problems.

Problem of Child Labour

According to the Constitution, 'Child labourers are those who are aged below 14 years and work in order to earn money'. Normally, the labour undertaken by minor children is called 'Child Labour'.

In many developing countries like India, exploitation and employment of children is a rampant social evil. It is assuming greater proportions year by year. Children below 14 years are being employed in various fields. Majority of the child labourers work in rural areas like fields, farms and plantations. The rest work in urban and industrial areas.



Poverty, domestic conflicts, divorce, domestic violence, excessive control, greed of industrialists, illiteracy, kidnapping of children and pledging them etc. are the causes behind child labour and its increase.

Child labour is the result of a serious lacuna in the social system. The people who extract work from children throughout the day, do not pay any attention to their mental, emotional, educational or medical needs. Instead, they harass them physically and mentally.

Due to ill-health, lack of nutritious food and proper medical facilities, forced employment, economic and social exploitation, thousands of child labourers are suffering even today. At an age when they should have been playing, day-dreaming or studying, their innocence has been snatched away from them by pushing them into employment.

The government has decided to take certain measures to free children from employment and exploitation, and rehabilitate them. The Central government has launched a programme called 'Rehabilitation Welfare Fund of Child Labourers' through which their educational, medical and fundamental needs can be fulfilled, and their exploitation stopped.

To prohibit appointment of child labourers, the 'Child Labour Prohibition and Control Act (1986)' has been enacted. Industrialists who violate this law, will have to mandatorily contribute Rs.20,000/- per child labourer to the Welfare Fund.

Constitutional provisions:

Article 24 of our Constitution declares that employing children below 14 years for work is a cognizable offence. It warns against employing children in hazardous industrial units. Under the Directive Policies of the State, the government has declared that ensuring the welfare of the children is its responsibility.

Do you know this?

According to 2011 census, even today there are 12.6 million children who have been forced to work as labourers in houses, roadside, factories and in the agricultural sector. 215 million children all over the world have been employed in various fields.

The Government had undertaken many measures to eradicate child labour. It launched the National Child Labour Project(NCLP) in 1988. This project is implemented at the state level too. The departments of Education, Labour, Women and Child Welfare together visit factories and identify child labourers. They rescue the child labourers and provide education along with all free facilities. Bal Mandirs are being set up for the education of such children at Taluk and District levels. These children are being provided free food, shelter, etc.

Under the 'Sarvashikshana Abhiyan' project, child labourers in Karnataka are being brought to school under the programme 'From drudgery to school', and they are being given free education. The Right to Education Act of 2009 guarantees compulsory free education to children of 6 years to 14 years. As per this Act, 25% seats in private schools are reserved for child labourers, backward class children, scheduled caste and scheduled tribe children, and children with special needs.

The Supreme Court has ruled that a 'Child Labour Rehabilitation Welfare Fund' should be established to protect the human rights and financial interests of child labourers and end

their exploitation. The Union Government implemented a 'National Policy' in 1987 for the welfare of child labourers. In 1988, it launched a Project for Child Labourers' Welfare. In 2006, the government brought into force the 'Child Labour Eradication and Rehabilitation Act'.

Activity:

If any of your friends is a child labourer and stays away from school, bring it to the notice of your teacher.

Harassment of Women:

One of the innumerable problems being faced by Indian women is harassment. In spite of their progress in various fields like education, economics, politics and industry, there is violence inflicted upon women. Rape, violence, suppression, dowry harassment, physical and mental harassment, forced abortions, use of vulgar language etc. are some of the harassments on women both inside and outside the house. Let us discuss a few problems.

Dowry:

Dowry is a custom associated with the Indian system of marriage. It is called 'Varadakshina' in Kannada. 'Vara' means a boy of marriageable age. 'Dakshina' is 'the giving of a gift'. It is a gift given to the bridegroom.

Any kind of property, jewellery or gift given to the bridegroom at the time of marriage, either before or after the marriage is known as 'dowry'. Giving or receiving dowry is a punishable crime.

When the bride's family cannot afford to satisfy the bridegroom's demand for money, jewellery etc. and yet have to struggle to fulfil them, it results in great exploitation. As a consequence, the bride's family will have to face severe financial constraints.

In this way, dowry is a social evil tormenting women. In the name of dowry, women are being abused and subjected to violence, torture and murder.

Ill-effects of Dowry

Dowry diminishes women's self-respect, dignity and stature. It leads to domestic conflicts. It also creates animosity between men

and women. Due to this evil, immorality and violence increase. Family relationships suffer. Families of brides get oppressed under financial constraints. Greed for dowry is leading to deception in the name of marriage. In order to escape from the dowry menace, people are resorting to child marriage. Female foeticide and female infanticide are increasing. The number of divorces is also rising.

Measures to eradicate dowry system

Prohibition of Dowry Act 1961:

In order to legally eradicate the dowry system, the Central government enacted a 'Prohibition of Dowry Act' in 1961. Under this Act, marrying under the condition of being provided dowry is prohibited. Those who violate this law are fined Rs.5000/- penalty or sent to jail for 6 months. Sometimes both the penalties are imposed.

This Act was amended in 1986 and made stricter. According to the amendment, any person who gives, takes or forces to give dowry can be imprisoned for 5 years and fined 15,000/- penalty.

Dowry deaths have been brought under the purview of 'Indian Penal Code' and 'Indian Criminal Procedure Code'. They can be tried only as non-bailable and non-negotiable offences.

Apart from legal measures, encouraging people to become awareness, inter-caste marriages, modern mass media, voluntary organizations and women associations can also help to eradicate this social evil from our midst.

Female Foeticide and Female Infanticide

Among the innumerable problems being faced by Indian women even in today's modern world, female foeticide and female infanticide are the most inhuman.

Female Foeticide

When the foetus is that of a girl and the parents do not want a girl baby to be born, they kill it in the womb itself. This is known as 'female foeticide'.

Developments in modern medicine enable the parents to know whether the foetus is that of a girl or boy through sex determination

tests. The desire for a male child is leading to misuse of modern technology. Through the help of scanning, people get to know the biological gender of the foetus, and if it is that of a girl and they do not want it, they get rid of it by killing it in the womb itself. Cases of such abortions are increasing in number day by day.

Cases of female foeticide are rising in number due to reasons like poverty, burden to dowry, illiteracy, ignorance, anti-women ideas, desire for male progeny etc.

As a result of female foeticide, there is a reduction in the number of women leading to imbalanced gender ratio, gender discrimination, degradation of women.

In order to stop sex determination tests of foetuses through modern technology, the 'Prohibition of Pre-natal Gender Determination Test Act' was enacted in 1994. In spite of this Act, clandestine female foeticide is being carried on.

Do you know this?

According to the 2011 census, with the exception of Kerala and Pondicherry, in all the states the number of women is less than that of men.

| Gender ratio as per 2001 census | | Gender ratio as per 2011 census | | |
|--|------------|--|--------------|------------|
| <i>Women</i> | <i>Men</i> | | <i>Women</i> | <i>Men</i> |
| 933 | 1000 | | 940 | 1000 |
| | | <i>Rural</i> | 947 | 1000 |
| | | <i>Urban</i> | 926 | 1000 |

Female Infanticide

'The inhuman practice of killing the female baby after it is born is female infanticide'. Cases of female infanticide are very rare these days.

If the government enacts a Prohibitory Act to stop shameful activities like female infanticide, the gender ratio between men and women will be equal.

EXERCISES

I Fill in the blanks with suitable words:

1. Article _____ of the Constitution prohibits employing children for work.
2. The 'Prohibition of Child Labour Act' came into practice in the year _____.
3. The National Policy was framed in _____.
4. The Prohibition of Dowry Act first came into effect in _____.

II Answer the following in one sentence each:

1. Mention any two social problems plaguing India.
2. What is meant by child labourers?
3. What is the meaning of female foeticide?
4. What is meant by female infanticide?

III Discuss the following in groups and answer the following:

1. Mention the causes for the problem of child labour.
2. What are the consequences of child labour?
3. Explain the measures for eradicating the problem of child labour.
4. What are the evil effects of dowry system?
5. What are the solutions for the problem of dowry?

IV Activity:

1. Make a list of the social problems of your place.

V Project :

1. Invite a legal expert to your school and conduct a Lecture about the laws of infanticide and childlabour.