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## A STUDY ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF LEGAL PROVISIONS RELATED TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN DINDIGUL DISTRICT

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### Introduction

Human rights are the foundations for a quality of life in which each individual's inherent dignity and worth will receive due respect and protection. The issues of human rights came into prominence with the establishment of the United Nations in 1954. Although there is no universally endorsed definition of human rights, the United Nations defined human rights as those rights, which are inherent in our nature and without which we cannot live as human beings. They are rights which enable people to fully develop and utilize their innate qualities, such as intelligence and talents and to satisfy deeper needs such as spiritually.

"Women's rights are human rights" and "personal is political" are not just empty slogans. They were evolved by the global women's movement in response to the marginalization of women and their issues. This was a demand by women, for recognition of the realities of their lives. It was years of work before the global community realized that women do not have to be imprisoned or in an occupied territory, to experience violation of their rights.

The types of abuse range from female infanticide and disproportionate malnutrition of girl children, to coercion, battery, mutilation, sexual assault and murder. These are faced by women in all regions of the world through all the stages of their lives. These experiences of violation are often within the perceived safe space of their own homes.

### Legal Provisions

To uphold the Constitutional mandate, the State has enacted various legislative measures intended to ensure equal rights, to counter social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities and to provide support services especially to working women.

Although women may be victims of any of the crimes such as 'Murder', 'Robbery', 'Cheating' etc, the crimes, which are directed specifically against women, are characterized as 'Crime against Women'. These are broadly classified under two categories.

#### (1)The Crimes Identified Under the Indian Penal Code (IPC)

- Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)
- Kidnapping & Abduction for different purposes ( Sec. 363-373)
- Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Deaths or their attempts (Sec. 302/304-B IPC)
- Torture, both mental and physical (Sec. 498-A IPC)
- Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC)
- Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC)
- Importation of girls (up to 21 years of age)

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**(2)The Crimes identified under the Special Laws (SLL)**

Although all laws are not gender specific, the provisions of law affecting women significantly have been reviewed periodically and amendments carried out to keep pace with the emerging requirements. Some acts which have special provisions to safeguard women and their interests are:

- The Employees State Insurance Act, 1948
- The Plantation Labour Act, 1951
- The Family Courts Act, 1954
- The Special Marriage Act, 1954
- The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
- The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 with amendment in 2005
- Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
- The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (Amended in 1995)
- Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971
- The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1976
- The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
- The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
- The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1983
- The Factories (Amendment) Act, 1986
- Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986
- Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987
- The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

**Methodology****Statement of the problem**

Human rights belong to everyone, yet horrific violations occur on a day basis against women in homes, workplaces, communities and civic institutions. Abuses are as blatant as withholding women's legal rights under the law, including the right to hold down a job, own or inherit property and to seek protection from violence.

Present research deals with the women awareness about right to equality, right to freedom, right against exploitation, right to freedom of religion, cultural and educational rights, right to property and rights to constitutional remedies.

**Objectives**

1. To find the socio economic status of the rural women
2. To assess the knowledge of rural women regarding their rights
3. To suggestions to improve the legal knowledge of the respondents

**Sampling**

Simple random sampling was used to select the sample. Totally 100 respondents were selected randomly as the sample from Athoor blocks. This study covers two panchayath (Chettiyapatti and Kallikampatti) from Aathoor block . The respondents are rural women from the age group of 18 years and above.

**Research design**

A non-experimental descriptive research strategy has been chosen for this study as the most appropriate method to the objectives of the study.

**Tools for Data Collection**

A structured interview schedule was prepared. The interview schedule consist components like Personal details, socio economic and legal status of the respondents. This interview schedule comprises both close ended and open ended questions.

**Analysis and interpretation**

The analyses are made using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Percentage table were prepared to analyze the data.

**Table- 1**  
**Distribution of the respondents by their age**

Age	No of the Respondents	Percentage
18 -20	12	12
21-30	30	30
31-40	19	19
41-50	20	20
above 50	19	19
Total	100	100

Table -1 shows that 30 percent of the respondents belonged to the age group of 21-30, followed by 20 percent of the respondents belonged to 41-50 years. Each 19 percent belonged to the age group of 31 - 40 years and above 50 years and 12 percent of the respondents belonged to below 20 years.

**Table-2 Distribution of the respondents by educational qualification**

Education	No of respondents	Percentage
Illiterate	29	29
Primary	33	33
Middle	13	13
Secondary	12	12
Higher Secondary	03	03
Graduates	04	04
Diploma	06	06
Total	100	100

Table -2 clearly indicates that 29 Percent of the respondents were illiterates, 33 percent of the respondents have completed primary school level, 13 percent of the respondents have completed their middle school, 12 percent of the respondents have completed secondary school, 4 percent of the respondents were graduates, 3 percent of the respondents have completed higher secondary and 6 percent of the respondents were diploma holders.

**Table-3 Distribution of the respondents by their marital status**

Marital status	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Unmarried	08	08
Married	68	68
Widow	14	14
Separate	10	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table -3 Shows that 68 percent of the respondents were married, 14 percent of the respondents were widows, 10 percent of the respondents were separated and 08 percent of the respondents were unmarried.

**Table-4 Distribution of the respondents by Age at Marriage**

Age at Marriage	No of respondents	Percentage
Below 18	36	36
Above 18	56	56
Not applicable	08	08
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table- 4 Shows that 36 percent of the respondents got married at the age of 18 and below, and 56 percent of the respondents got married at the age of above 18 and 8 per cent of the respondents were unmarried.

**Table-5 Distribution of respondents by their Occupational status**

Occupation	No of the respondents	Percentage
Coolie	35	35
Construction work	06	06
Tailoring	04	04
Millwork	22	22
Self Employment	01	01
Housewife	31	31
Government Job	01	01
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table -5 explain that 35 percent of the respondents were coolies, 31 percent were housewives, 6 percent were construction labourers, each one percent were self employees and government employees, 4 percent of the respondents were tailors, 22 percent were Mill workers.

**Table -6 Distribution of the Respondents by their Knowledge about Human Rights**

Particulars	Know	Don't know	Percent
Human Rights	52	48	100
Women's Rights	36	64	100

Table 6 shows that 52 percent of the respondents have knowledge about human rights,

48 percent of the respondents have no knowledge about human rights. 36 percent of the respondents have knowledge about women's rights and 64 percent of the respondents have no knowledge about women's rights.

**Table-7 Distribution of the respondents by their acquiring knowledge of women's rights**

Source of Knowledge	No of the respondents	Percent age
Education	15	41.7
Media	07	19.4
Neighbour	05	13.9
Family	04	11.1
Peer group	05	13.9
Total	36	100.0

Table-7 shows that 41.7 percent of the respondents said that acquiring knowledge about women's rights through education, 19.4 percent of the respondents said that acquiring knowledge about women's rights through media, each 13.9 percent of the respondents said that acquiring knowledge about women's rights through neighbours and Peer group followed by 11.1 percent of the respondents said that acquiring knowledge about women's rights through family.

**Table-8 Distribution of the respondents by knowledge about GBV**

Particulars	Know	Don't Know	Total
PNDT Act	52	48	100
Prohibition of Child Marriage Act	60	40	100
Marriage Act (Hindu/Christian/Muslim)	43	57	100
Widow Remarriage act	41	59	100
Divorce law	67	33	100
Maternity benefit Act 1961	54	48	100

The above table indicates that , Out of 100 respondents, 52 percent have awareness about Sex Selective Abortion Prohibition Act and 48 percent of the respondents have no awareness about Sex Selective Abortion prohibition act, 60 percent have awareness about Child Marriage prohibition act and 40 percent of the respondents have no awareness about child marriage act, 43 percent have awareness about marriage act and 57 percent of the respondents have no awareness about marriage act, 41 percent of the respondents have knowledge about remarriage act, 59 percent have no knowledge about remarriage act and 67 percent have awareness about divorce law and 33 percent of the respondents have no awareness about divorce law,.

**Table-9 Distribution of the respondents by knowledge about special law related GBV**

Know about rights	Know	Don't know	Percent
Dowry prohibition Act 1961	89	11	100
Reproductive Health Rights	43	57	100
Indecent Representation of	21	79	100

Women (Prohibition) Act 1986			
The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005	56	44	100
Sexual Harassment Act at Workplace 2013	31	69	100

The above table reveals that, out of 100 respondents, 89 percent of the respondents have knowledge about Dowry prohibition act and 11 percent have no knowledge about Dowry prohibition act. 43 percent have knowledge about reproductive health rights and 57 percent of the respondents have no knowledge about reproductive health rights. 56 percent of the respondents have awareness about domestic violence act and 44 percent of the respondents have no knowledge about domestic violence act. 31 percent of the respondents have awareness about sexual harassment act at workplace and 44 percent of the respondents have no knowledge about sexual harassment act at workplace.

**Table-10 Distribution of the respondents by suggestion to get women's rights**

Particular	No of the respondents	Percent
Create awareness	21	21
Utilize legal rights	22	22
Encouragement	16	16
Including in the Education System	22	22
Develop self decision making	19	19
Total	100	100

The above table shows that, Among 100 respondents ask about suggestion to get women human rights. 21 percent felt that create awareness is the best source of getting women human rights 22 percent felt that utilize legal rights is the best source of getting women human rights, 16 percent felt that encouragement, 22 percent felt that education, 19 percent felt that develop self decision making are best source of getting women human rights and empowerment.

## FINDINGS

The study assesses the knowledge of legal rights related to gender based violence among the rural women. Most (28 percent) of the respondents belonged to the age group of 21-30. Most (34 Percent) of the respondents were illiterates, 28 percent of the respondents have completed primary school level and only 4 percent of the respondents were graduates.

Most (64 percent) of the respondents were married, 39 percent of the respondents got married at the age of 18 and below. 32 percent of the respondents were coolies, 29 percent were housewives. Half (49 percent) of the respondents have knowledge about human rights. 42 percent of the respondents have knowledge about women's rights. 52 percent have awareness about Sex Selective Abortion Prohibition Act, 60 percent have awareness about Child Marriage prohibition act, 43 percent have awareness about marriage act, 41 percent of the respondents have knowledge about remarriage act and 67 percent have awareness about divorce law. 89 percent of the respondents have knowledge about Dowry prohibition act, 43 percent have knowledge about reproductive health rights, 56 percent of the respondents have awareness

about domestic violence act, 31 percent of the respondents have awareness about sexual harassment act at workplace. 21 percent felt that create awareness is the best source of getting women human rights 22 percent felt that utilize legal rights is the best source of getting women human rights, 16 percent felt that encouragement, 22 percent felt that education, 19 percent felt that develop self decision making are best cause for getting women human rights. Education helps to eradicate poverty, improve the knowledge, create awareness about the issues, etc.

### **SUGGESTIONS**

- Women literacy rate should be increased to 100% through policy maker and government. Education promotes the knowledge of women. Then only they will get their rights in all fields.
- Government should take necessary steps to provide free legal awareness for rural women
- Training programmes must be provided to update the knowledge of women about legal rights
- Provide gender sensitization training to law enforcement and judicial personnel

### **CONCLUSION**

Human rights are fundamental freedom of women. Women are still considered and treated as inferior to men in all walks of life. Statutory provisions were formulated and enacted to safeguard the rights of weaker people. Despite all these safeguards, the women in India continue to suffer, due to lack of their rights illiteracy and oppressive practices and customs. The resultant consequences are sex ratio, high infant mortality rate, low literacy rate, high dropout of girl children from school, low wage rate etc. To uphold the constructive measures intended to more equal rights, to counter social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities and to provide support services, especially to rural women. Now-a-Days Violence affects the live of millions of women and girls in all socio-economic classes around the world. It cuts across cultural and religious barriers and takes a variety of forms, from domestic abuse to the child marriages and female circumcision. Violence against women is largely unreported. Fear and stigma often prevent women from reporting incidents of violence or seeking assistance. In fact, 80 percent of women who have been physically abused by their partners have never informed the Police, NGOs or shelters. Such abuses continue today for various reasons.

Every woman and girls entitled to the realization of all human rights- Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural on equal terms with men, free from discrimination. Women also enjoy certain human rights. Women are guaranteed equal treatment and freedom from discrimination in the most basic human rights treaty.

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