

Equality in Workplace & Home

Rekha Sharma

We have come a long way when it comes to reaching gender equality and eliminating violence against women. Women essay numerous roles in their daily lives and they must know the rights related to all these roles. Also, to know whom to approach when their rights are violated.

Every day, women around the world face violence at multiple levels—sexual, emotional and psychological and these victims of abuse come from every strata of the society—rich or poor, and from every age group—old or young. The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic has increased the risk of women who were already living in vulnerable situations before the emergence of the pandemic. Reports from various

corners of the world have shown that violence on women has intensified during this pandemic, adding to their plight.

The past decades have shown huge changes in treatment of women inside and outside homes but the path to gender equality is still marred with patriarchal notions and regressive mindset of the society. The legendary United States Supreme Court judge Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg puts gender equality in the best way

possible. She had said, “I ask no favor for my sex. All I ask of our brethren is that they take their feet off our necks.” Women across the world have stories to share—stories of harassment, pain, suffering and most importantly, inequality.

Women have had to face inequality in homes and also in their workplaces. Women across the world have reached heights in this male-dominated world but on the other side there are also challenges that



The author is Chairperson, National Commission for Women. Email: chairperson-nwc@nic.in

they face. With more women entering the workforce, sexual harassment at workplace has assumed different forms. The pandemic has shown us that as definition of workplace changes so does the harassment of women in the professional space. Workplace sexual harassment leads not only to women suffering from mental trauma but it also sabotages their right to work and their right to a dignified life. Sexual harassment at workplace is not only a threat to women security but also to the economy as it discourages women from taking up jobs forcing them to restrict opportunities available to them. Harassment at workplace and lack of proper grievance redressal system creates an insecure and an apprehensive environment for women.

Among the many work and lifestyle changes during the pandemic, one of the most prominent has been 'work from home' becoming the new norm and therefore it becomes all the more important that cyber workplace harassment also be taken into account while addressing sexual harassment at workplace against women. The National Commission for Women, under its mandate, reviews the existing provisions of the Constitution and other laws affecting women and thereafter recommends amendments to suggest remedial legislative measures to meet the changes needed. Taking note of the plight of women at workplace, the Commission reviewed the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, Redressal) Act where the Commission observed that the direction regarding constitution of an Internal Complaints Committee is not adhered by many. The Commission also observed that the definition of sexual harassment at workplace needs to be expanded to include gender-based cybercrimes.

A family is the smallest unit of the society and a violence-free home is the key to a violence-free





society. Women safety stands to be one of the most prominent activities of the Commission and during the imposition of the nationwide lockdown over coronavirus, the Commission launched a WhatsApp emergency helpline number 7217735372 for reporting cases of domestic violence. The Commission in collaboration with Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) runs a project to empower women and to help women survivors of violence. The project runs across seven States, Bihar, Assam, Meghalaya, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Tamil Nadu to promote support mechanism for women victims of domestic violence and to create a systematic grievance redressal mechanism within the criminal justice system. The project entails placement of trained social workers for providing psycho-legal services for violated women at all District Headquarters.

The first step towards making women more comfortable in reporting about the violence against them is to change the mindset of police. We must always keep in mind that the police too belong to the same patriarchal society and women often lack the courage to go to a police station. Any woman who gathers enough courage to step into

a police station should not have to face uncomfortable questions such that she feels violated all over again.

The biggest form of women empowerment is to make them aware of their legal rights so that they can be their own torchbearers and the best way to do it is to educate women about the legal provisions available for their protection. Legal awareness gives women a chance to live a dignified way of life.

Our police system is a reflection of our society.

To address the objective of making police more sensitive towards grievances of women, the Commission has been conducting One day Gender Sensitisation Workshops across the country for police personnel. The programme aims at bringing behavioral change in police personnel to enable them to act without prejudice and with compassion while dealing with victims of gender-based crimes and women in general.

Women essay numerous roles in their daily lives and they must know the rights related to all these roles so that they know whom to approach when their rights are violated. The biggest form of women empowerment is to make them aware of their legal rights so that they can be their own torchbearers and the best way to do it is to educate women about the legal provisions available for their protection. Legal awareness gives women a chance to live a dignified way of life. The present women population is marred with poverty, illiteracy and ignorance of law due to which a large section of women suffer injustice and violation of their rights. The Commission through its programme aims to



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WOMEN**



make justice accessible for the poorest of the poor. Under the joint collaborative programme of National Legal Services Authority and NCW, women especially belonging to the lower strata of the society are given practical knowledge about the basic legal rights and remedies provided under various women related laws, thereby making them fit to face the challenges in real life situations. The programme makes women aware of the various machineries of the justice delivery system available for grievance redressal. The programme explains women the procedure of approaching and utilising various channels available for the redressal of grievances, the Police, the Executive and the Judiciary. It sensitises

women and girls about their Rights as provided under the various laws including the Indian Penal Code, 1860; the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961; the Prevention of Domestic Violence to Women Act, 2005 etc.

The younger generation has a huge role to play when it comes to ensuring gender equality and to influence young minds towards a violence-free society, NCW initiated a comprehensive Gender Sensitisation and Legal Awareness Programme in collaboration with Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan at Kendriya Vidyalayas, for students of Class 11th and 12th under which a booklet of 'Major Laws Relating to Women', as well as content on

'Gender Sensitisation' was made available for students. The booklet was made available on the website of the Commission to be used by the students.

We have come a long way when it comes to reaching gender equality and eliminating violence against women. Over the years, women have had to face issues besides the ones commonly shared by humankind and it is to be said that women have fought all their battles valorously. It is our collective responsibility as a society to ensure equality for women and we must not stop till every woman, no matter which background she comes from can live a free and dignified life. □

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