



## Editor's Column

South India's infamous "devadasi" system, though outlawed in 1988, does not seem to disappear. The complex interplay of poverty, social circumstances and sex trade intertwined around religious practices has institutionalized slavery and sexual exploitation of women. The system, which dedicates girls to a life of sex work in the name of religion, continues despite being made illegal in 1988.

In this century, the poor, who were being abused by the system began to use it to their benefit. Girls were dedicated to be "devadasis" before they reached puberty. This essentially meant that the child would be taken to a temple and a ritual conducted where she would be "married" to Yellamma, the goddess.

The "Devadasi" lived with one man throughout her life, known as the Mallik, who supported her and his children through her.

Today, many Malliks are unable to support the woman and her children so "Devadasis" change partners, leading to sexually - transmitted

diseases and many die of AIDS. Many move to cities and enter into sex work.

In the wake of this abhorrent practice, the Supreme Court has recently issued notice to the Centre, the NCW, and the States of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, on a PIL for checking sexual exploitation of Dalit girls after naming them as Devadasis and sought their response on this

loathsome practice still prevalent at several places, though the respective governments had abolished it by enacting laws on the lines of 1988 central legislation.

The National Commission for Women taking up this issue had earlier conducted seminars in different states with a view to creating awareness about this evil practice and thereafter recommended that the state governments may develop integrated rehabilitation package programmes for the devadasis and their children, including shelter, vocational training, ensured employment, healthcare and education. The NCW welcomes the efforts of the apex court because the act of dedication of devadasis is a matter of national shame which needs to be stopped forthwith in all parts of the country.

### FOCUS

### Devadasi System

## This is India!

The latest India Human Development Survey (IHDS) conducted by the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) says that 4 out of 10 women in India still have no say in their marriage; 6 out of 10 practice some form of head covering and the average Indian household gives over Rs. 30,000 in dowry. The NCAER's latest survey covered 42000 households, based on the data covering the period 2011-12.

The data show that child marriage has come down to 48% from 60% prevalent in 2004-05. Women autonomy still remains severely constrained, with 41% replying in the negative when asked about their say in their marriage and only 18% said they knew their husbands before marriage. Just 10% women said they could take decisions to buy large household items on their own. 81% women needed permission to visit a doctor and 60% of them – including 59% forward caste Hindus and 83% Muslims – practiced some form of "purdah" or "ghunghat".

### Status of Complaints received in March, 2014

Month	Registered	Action taken	Pending	Closed
March, 2014	1760	1476	284	489
Online	445	445	0	96

The Commission took suo motu cognizance of 16 cases in March, 2014.



## Chairperson's Page

❖ NCW Chairperson Mamta Sharma was the Chief Guest at a programme organized by Best Central Railway Majdoor Sangh on Women Empowerment. Speaking on the occasion, Ms. Mamta Sharma said that apart from creating awareness and generating empowerment among women, all railway officials should take part in sensitization programmes and raise their voices against atrocities committed against women by way of foeticide, child marriage, domestic violence, rape, acid attack, trafficking, etc.



*Ms. Mamta Sharma presenting prizes to the awardees*

❖ Ms. Sharma attended the Rajiv Gandhi Excellence Award Ceremony and gave away prizes to the awardees selected from all over the country for their distinguished services in a their respective fields.

❖ Ms. Sharma was the Chief Guest at a workshop organized by Manan Sewa Santhan titled "Betiya" wherein women from different fields of work were felicitated. The workshop also discussed women-related issues like female foeticide, health care, HIV positive children, women empowerment, etc.



*Ms. Sharma addressing the workshop on "Betiya"*

## Important Decisions

❖ The Lieutenant Governor of Delhi has issued orders that from now on, every marriage has to be registered within 60 days after marriage, failing which, the couple will be fined up to Rs. 1000/-. Moreover, those who furnish false statements will be fined as well as imprisoned. Currently, marriage registration is not mandatory in Delhi

❖ The Supreme Court has held that a central government woman employee can get uninterrupted leave for 2 years for child care, which also includes needs like the examination and sickness of her children below 18 years. Setting aside an order of the Calcutta High Court, the Supreme Court said that the childcare leave beyond 730 days can be granted by combining other leaves, if due.

❖ The Delhi High Court has made helmets compulsory for pillion riders irrespective of their gender or religion. Expressing concern over the number of accidents, the Delhi Transport Department has said that two riders die every day on city roads and helmets will save lives. Many head injuries could have been prevented or their severity reduced through use of helmets.

❖ The Supreme Court has said that if a man and woman "lived like husband and wife for a long period and had children," it would be presumed that the two were married and the kids could not be termed illegitimate.

## "Nirbheek" revolver for women

Keeping in mind women's safety, a special light-weight revolver for women named "Nirbheek" was launched by the Kanpur Ordinance Factory at Lucknow. The .32 bore revolver weighing 500 gm., costing 1.22 lakh, can be kept by women in their purses.



## New guidelines for handling of rape victims

The Union Health Ministry has issued fresh guidelines, protocols and standard operating procedures, particularly for doctors, for care, treatment and rehabilitation of rape victims to be implemented in all public and private health facilities across the nation.

It will be incumbent on every government hospital in the country to treat rape victims free of charge and even post-treatment will have to be gratis. The Ministry has also appealed to private hospitals to treat rape victims without charge as part of their corporate social responsibility.

## Making a difference

A group of tribal women from a village of MP's Jabua district has not only created a better social structure but also helped men to get rid of alcohol and other addictions. A fine of Rs. 5000/- is imposed on the person, who is found consuming hard drinks. The money saved from alcohol is used for educating children.

Interestingly, in the past four years, no police complaint has been lodged by the villagers, as the committee of women resolves all issues among themselves. Currently, the group is engaged in curbing the dowry menace.

## Members' Visits

❖ Member Hemlata Kheria participated in a "Phone-in-Programme", to discuss women-related issues organized by Prasar Bharati in Delhi. ● Ms. Kheria was the Chief Guest in a national seminar on "Dimensions of Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005: Journey so Far," in New Delhi. The Member spoke on the various aspects of domestic violence and urged women to make use of this Act to protect themselves from physical and mental abuse. She also discussed the role of protection officers and the police to combat this menace and stressed the need for change in the mindset of our patriarchal society. ● Ms. Kheria as the Chief Guest spoke on the importance of women empowerment in a Vishwa Shanti Mahayagya and Vishwa Paryavaran Mahasammelan held at Bhagpat in UP.

❖ NCW Member Dr. Charu WaliKhanna was the Chief Guest at the seminar on "Women Empowerment and Political participation", organized by Rajdhani College in New Delhi. ● The Member chaired the National consultation on "Gender and Land Rights" & 2nd Expert Committee Meeting held at NCW. ● Dr. WaliKhanna attended the Board Meeting of the Task Force on "Women & Child Development" held at New Delhi. ● Dr. WaliKhanna attended the Expert Committee Meeting on drafting of "The Prevention and Protection of Women from (Publicly Dehumanizing and Stigmatizing) Atrocities Bill, 2014" at Jaipur.



*Member Kheria inaugurates the seminar on domestic violence*



*Dr. WaliKhanna with the participants of the National Consultation on Gender and Land Rights and Expert Committee.*



❖ Member Adv. Nirmala Samant Prabhavalkar attended two conferences organised by Lawyers' Collective in collaboration with UNDP and the British High Commission on "Service Delivery Framework for Rape Survivors in Mumbai", held in New Delhi and Mumbai respectively. ● The Member attended the Session's court in Mumbai, wherein, the court convicted three accused of gang-raping a photo journalist in the Shakti Mills Compound in Mumbai in August, 2013 under the amended law recommended by the Justice Verma Committee, in the wake of December 16, 2012, gangrape case.

❖ Member Shamina Shafiq attended a seminar on "Youth and Governance" in New Delhi. The seminar highlighted linkages between youth and governance and defined relationships between individuals, communities, society and institutions. ● Ms. Shafiq attended a conference organized by *Maitri* on "Many voices, one movement – ending sexual violence in India". She participated in the session "Gaining Control & Seeking Justice – Aftermath: Communicating with Police and Hospitals". ● The Member was the Chief Guest speaker at a conference organized by UNWA on "Rape – A Global Challenge – Understand and Look for Solutions". ● Ms. Shafiq delivered a lecture on "Sexual Harassment and Its Social Aspects" at a workshop at UNDP. ● The Member attended the first meeting of the expert committee to discuss "Prevention and Protection of Women from Dehumanising and Stigmatising Atrocities Bill 2014", at Jaipur.

❖ NCW Member Laldingliani Sailo, visited the *Prerana* Night Shelter in Mumbai for children and mothers affected by trafficking. She was satisfied with the working of the shelter and found the workers closely interacting with the mothers and children, who were placed in their care. She also visited the women ward of Byculla District Jail alongwith Member Nirmala Samant Prabhavalkar. She found that the women prison was being run in a satisfactory manner and adequately staffed. The inmates have facilities for skill training, crèche, healthcare, grievance redressal, legal aid, etc. The quality of food and the level of hygiene was satisfactory. However, the question of segregation of habitual offenders should be addressed.

### Women in combat role in SSB

Breaking the male bastion in the five decade-old Sashstra Seema Bal (SSB), the government has approved recruitment of young women as 'combat officers' in the second largest border guarding force. Young women under and up to the age of 25 years will be recruited as direct entry officers at the rank of Assistant Commandants. The force will have trained women officers on ground by late 2015.

### Congratulations

Justice G. Rohini has assumed charge as the new Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court, becoming the first woman to hold the post. Justice Rohini, was earlier, a judge at Andhra Pradesh High Court and is expected to continue for a period of 4 years.

### Do You Know?

The Women in Politics Map 2014, launched by the Inter Parliamentary Union and UN Women, has ranked India 73rd in participation of women in politics with just 11% representation in parliament. India ranks below countries like Haiti, Rwanda, Congo, Chad and Zambia.

In the UK, nearly 20% of the ministerial posts are occupied by women, while in the US it is 40%.

for further information visit our website at : [www.ncw.nic.in](http://www.ncw.nic.in)