



Editor's Column

Women today are subjected to various atrocities but one such evil which is seldom highlighted is the pathetic condition of women abandoned by family members in Mental Asylums. There are innumerable cases where perfectly normal women are forced into mental asylums after the death of their husbands. The family members, very often, force them into mental asylums in order to grab their property and money. However, in this heinous activity, not only the family members but doctors as well as asylum authorities become parties to such conspiracies with a view to making some easy money.

A few years ago, a well-known newspaper exposed an alleged racket in the issuance of fake certificates by senior psychiatrists at a mental

hospital to help in getting rid of wives by proving in courts that they were mentally unsound. Sometimes, the certificates are issued for a handsome consideration, without even meeting the wives. The sting operation was carried out by a reporter, who procured a certificate for his wife from the doctor. The entire interview and the sordid transaction were recorded in a spy camera.

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Women and Mental Health

In this context, the Central Government has taken a laudable initiative by commissioning a survey to determine the condition of many such unfortunate women. The Women & Child Development Ministry has asked the National Commission for Women to carry out this survey which incidentally, will be the first of its kind.

The Indian Government spends a

mere 0.06% of the Health Budget on mental care. According to statistics, there is only one psychiatrist for every 3,43,000 people in the country. To stop this kind of heinous crime, it is high time that some foolproof procedures are implemented so that a woman's mental condition, whether normal or otherwise, can be ascertained beyond doubt. The mental asylums of the country must check the validity of insanity certificates issued by the medical officers before admitting them as fake certificates could be used by the husbands and family members against women to usurp their property or start divorce proceedings. Finally, people found guilty of committing such depravity against women must be given stringent punishment so that such horrendous activities to deprive women of their dignity and human rights do not continue.

Celebrating Women Leadership

The Confederation of Indian Industry's (CII), Indian Women Network, organized a conference on "Celebrating Women Leadership" in Bangalore. The day-long meeting discussed issues relating to women on boards, work-life balance, secret of successful career women, future of women's healthcare and wellbeing and women entrepreneurship.

Speaking on the occasion, NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam urged the participants to have a hobby to pursue outside their jobs and family. She said it was imperative for women to take care of their health and nutrition. She also exhorted women to involve themselves in policy and planning at the national level and urged women to advertise their achievements.

Addressing the gathering Usha Ananthasubramanian, Chairman and Managing Director of Bharatiya Mahila Bank (BMB) made out a strong case for raising the number of women directors on the boards of listed companies,



Ms. Lalitha Kumaramangalam addressing the gathering.

Land Rights for Women Farmers

M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) recently organised a panel discussion on “Land Rights for Women Farmers” in Chennai. Though more than 80% of the work in agriculture is done by women yet only 13% of women are land owners. Not only their contribution is seen as unpaid family labour, lack of land rights denies women the right to financial credit, which, in turn, means no access to water, fertilizer, etc. In the backdrop of these facts, while speaking on the occasion, NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam said that one of the reasons why women face violence was due to lack of control over their financial resources, which includes property. In order to reduce systemic violence against women, their inclusion in planning and policy frameworks right from the grassroots level was essential.

Prof. Swaminathan, founder, MSSRF, emphasized the need to engender the research agenda and also hoped that Women Reservation Bill would be passed soon in the Lok Sabha to complete the process towards social and political empowerment of women. Other distinguished speakers included Dr. Rukmini Rao, Founder Gramya Resource Centre for Women, Ms. Geeta Ramaseshan, Senior Advocate, and Ms. Mina Swaminathan, Chair, Gender & Development, MSSRF.



NCW Chairperson and Prof. Swaminathan in conversation

Accelerating Women Entrepreneurship

FICCI organized a seminar on “Accelerating Women Entrepreneurship” in partnership with Intel India in New Delhi. Speaking on the occasion, NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam underlined the need for imparting skill based training to women in planning and administration and also stressed provision of technical skills to women engaged in agriculture. She said that women own less than 5% of the land in the agricultural sector and spoke about the profits that could be reaped through agricultural exports if products were actually developed to help women increase their productivity.

The Chairperson called for more representation of professional women in the boards of companies and emphasised the need to look at entrepreneurship beyond the traditional sense. Women must take to mentoring other women, which should become part of the ecosystem. She said, women suffer from poor asset ownership and fare poorly on the awareness levels of their legal rights. The Chairperson argued for providing flexible working hours for married women and it could not be an excuse for any company to remove women employees after they had children.



NCW Chairperson at the release of the book "Accelerating Women Entrepreneurship; road map for NCR. Shri A. Didar Singh is on her right

Dialogue for Women Leaders

The Brahma Kumaris organized a dialogue for women leaders at their retreat centre in Gurgaon. The dialogue brought together more than 100 women leader participants of various ages, including representatives from Commissions, media, independent professionals, home makers and ministers to deliberate on the topic “Strengthening the foundation of character to restore respect and honour of women”. NCW Chairperson participated in the dialogue. The issues that emerged are related to the need for value education from an early stage; women’s role in strengthening good sanskars in the family; increased role of media and attitude of looking at the soul inside the physical body of a male or female.

Members' Visits

❖ NCW Member Laldingliani Sailo went on a 5-day visit to Sikkim to assess the social economic and political empowerment of women in Sikkim and to interact with the members of women self-help groups, nurses, women doctors, traders, women police personnel, members of Panchayats, civil morcha members, women from NGOs and state government departments. The participants discussed the benefits they were getting and how it was helping them to earn their livelihood. Speaking to the women present in the session, the Member said that safety, dignity and empowerment of women were very important and the Commission was always there to help women in every way.

● The Member visited the women self-help group project at Raymindu, being implemented by NABARD. She also visited Mantalaya, a shelter home run by the state government for women at Gangtok. There were sixteen women in the Shelter Home. For the dumb inmates, she suggested exploring avenues to teach them with sign language.

● The Member also visited Kadamtam Women Milk Producer Cooperative Society at Yelli. A member of the society told her how they started in 2001 with 40 kgs of milk and a small stall; now every house has 2-3 cows with each house contributing 20 kgs. 300-400 kgs of milk are supplied everyday to the Milk Union at Rs. 29-40 per kg according to the quality of milk tested in the testing machine. As a result, each member earns Rs. 22000/- maximum to Rs. 4500/- minimum per month. She also visited the Rongynek jail.

● The Member visited Ben Peku village and interacted with women engaged in floriculture. The women complained of the poor road conditions, due to which they face difficulty in reaching the main town for marketing their products. They also said they were paid Rs. 2/- per flower by the vendors while the market price was Rs. 10/-. They also face water crises as they are solely dependent on the nearby river.

● Later, Ms. Sailo visited Dzongu village and met women cardamom farmers. They complained of the high price of cardamom saplings and requested for provision of free saplings from the government.



Member Sailo interacting with women participants. (below) Member with women engaged in floriculture and with cardamom farmers

Workshop on Gender Transformative, Planning and Budgeting

The UN Women organized a national workshop on "Towards Gender Transformative, Planning and Budgeting" in New Delhi. NCW Chairperson, Lalitha Kumaramangalam participated in the workshop. The workshop brought together stakeholders from the Ministry of Women and Child Development, National Commission for Women, and Ministries such as Panchayati Raj, Agriculture and Rural Development together with state women's machineries, civil society organizations and activists, scholars, practitioners and researchers from the national women's movements. The thematic sessions explored two entry points: (1) roles of the national and state women's machineries; and (2) sectoral interventions towards women's empowerment such as those made in sectors like rural development, agriculture, ICT and urban development. The proceedings enabled discussions on good practices in gender mainstreaming, including gender budgeting in national and state women's machineries and provided an important platform for creating a roadmap for future interventions.

Important Decisions

- The External Affairs Ministry has directed all its Passport Offices to accept the date of birth of the child mentioned in a court order which should be accompanied by a copy of NOC of CARA bearing date of birth of the adopted child as his birth proof and not insist on a birth certificate. The decision has been taken to overcome the problems of abandoned, orphaned, inter-country children facing difficulties in obtaining relevant documents necessary for obtaining passports.
- To encourage parents on the birth of a girl child, the Rajasthan Government has taken "Lado Rani" initiative distributing special kits and booklets detailing 62 schemes and programmes at government hospitals. The kit comprising diapers, clothes and booklet will be distributed after a girl child is born in any government hospital at Nagaur in Rajasthan.
- The Supreme Court has ruled that if an unmarried couple is living together as husband and wife, for a long time, then they would be presumed to be legally married and the woman is eligible to inherit the property after the death of her partner. The Supreme Court passed the order in a property dispute, where the family members contested that their grandfather, who was living with a woman for 20 years after his wife's death, was not legally wedded to the woman and she was not entitled to inherit the property after his death.
- As the dead line for appointing one woman board member had ended on 31st March 2015, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has asked stock exchanges to levy 50,000/- penalty on listed entities that complied with the requirement between 1st April and 30th June, 2015. Companies which complied between July and September 2015, will be imposed a penalty of Rs. 50,000 and an additional fine of Rs. 1000/- a day till the date of compliance.
- As per Delhi High Court's directions to create awareness of stringent laws against rape and sexual harassment, the government is set to undertake a publicity campaign with posters, documentaries, booklets etc. to enlighten women on how to deal with such crimes.

This is India!

A Panchayat in Fatehabad district in Haryana recently settled a dowry case by fining the accused family by just 0.75 paisa. The bizarre dowry settlement took place between two families of Haryana and Punjab. The girl's family had accused the man's family of demanding a car in dowry. The ring ceremony had been organized in January 20, 2014, and the wedding was fixed on April 22, 2015. When the girl's family requested the groom's family to rethink on their demand, the boy's family remained adamant and broke the wedding for which even invitation cards had been distributed. The girl's family had no option but to bring the matter to the notice of Fatehabad police. The DySP Fatehabad handed the matter to the nodal cell for settlement.

The boy's family was summoned to settle the dispute, after which it was referred to the local Panchayat. Unbelievably, the Panchayat imposed a fine of 0.75 paisa for breaking the wedding and even waived off the 2.11 lakh paid as Shagun. The girl's family was happy and said that their daughter was saved from the clutches of a dowry hungry family; money did not matter. Interestingly enough, the fine of 0.75 paisa was donated to a Fatehabad cow shed.

Do you know?

According to the latest statistics of the Delhi Police, rape cases in Delhi have almost doubled in 2014 as compared to the previous year. On an average, every day, 6 women are being raped in Delhi and 12 molestation FIRs are lodged everyday.

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

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