



Editor's Column

1st October is observed worldwide every year as the International Day for Elderly People. The idea behind, the observance is to project as well as examine searchingly the magnitude, dimension and ramification of the problems faced by the elderly people and create awareness of the ordeal experienced by these hapless segments of the society.

As per statistics, India's elderly population has already crossed 100 million mark in 2011 and older women constitute almost 60% of the total number. A research study shows that there is a sudden acceleration in decline in the number of older man from the age of 70 onwards whereas faster decline in the number of older women starts only after the age of 80 years.

With age-marginalation, neglect, isolation, abuse, mistreatment etc. stare in the face of older women. Additionally, with the growing trend towards nuclear families, the age-old bonds between parents and their children, between grand

parents and grand children are weakening. Thus, older women in the family feel neglected and forlorn. Their position is more pathetic in the urban areas where the joint family system is slowly crumbling. Neglected by their kith and kin, older women lead lonely lives in economic penury and social neglect. Financial insecurity further compounds their problems. Many of them suffering from age-related ailments, do not get

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Elderly Women

proper medical attention. Most of them rely on divine powers instead of medical science.

A survey conducted by Agewell Foundation found that majority of older women were not aware of their rights and as a result, their human rights are often violated with impunity. In rural areas, almost one-fourth of the elderly respondents said that their rights were violated because of their gender. Majority of respondents also stated that social and religious practices have further enhanced gender inequality and

consequent neglect of elderly women.

Admittedly, the plight of a large number of elderly women is a matter of grave concern and calls for immediate remedial action.

It is true that the government of India has taken some major initiatives to strengthen the status of older persons through various schemes like the 'Varishtha Bima Yojana'; providing physical aids and assisted living devices to persons below the poverty line as well as healthcare facilities.

Yet, these multiple schemes, both private and public, are running in a fragmented manner and majority of elderly population still remains uncovered.

Therefore, there is need for more legal provisions and rules, more gender-based old-age schemes, besides grassroot level security programmes to protect their basic human rights. However, what is most important is sensitization of the younger generations to the plight of older persons so that elders can live with dignity in their sunset years.

Victim Compensation Scheme

The Delhi Government has approved a victim compensation scheme enhancing the upper limit of compensation for rape victims to Rs. 5 lakh from the existing Rs. 3 lakh and to the victims of acid attack to Rs. 7 lakh from Rs. 3 lakh. The scheme also includes, victims of gangrape, unnatural sexual offences and burns. Earlier, as per the scheme, the victim's kin got Rs. 3-5 lakh for loss of life, but the new scheme has proposed Rs. 5-10 lakh. The scheme also proposes the same amount for those with loss of any limb or resulting in 80% permanent disability as they lose their livelihood and their medical expenses also increase.

Consultancy on Surrogacy Issues



NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam addressing the gathering

Speaking on the occasion, NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam said, “in the draft Bill governing surrogacy, only married women are allowed to become surrogate mothers. But we felt this restricted the reproductive rights of single women. All single women, unmarried, divorced or separated, should be allowed to become surrogate mothers”.

The Commission also wants to bar NRIs and Indians settled abroad from commissioning surrogate services in India, to prevent exploitation of women. “The Bill does not allow foreigners to avail of surrogacy, but we think that it should be widened to include NRIs and overseas citizens of India, because surrogacy is essentially a contract between the haves and have nots”, Ms. Kumaramangalam added.



A view of the participants

A national consultation on “Surrogacy Issues” was organised by the National Commission for Women in New Delhi. The objectives of the consultation were to (i) critically examine the provisions of the Assisted Reproductive Technologies (Regulation) Bill (ARTs) in the context of commercial surrogacy and to offer concrete recommendations for policy and legislation on ARTs and surrogacy in India; (ii) to ensure that the regulatory measures will protect the health and the rights of surrogate women and of children born through surrogacy.

In this context, the Health Ministry had invited suggestions from the stakeholders in finalising the legal framework to monitor the unregulated ART market.



At the consultation (from left) Member Rekha Sharma, Member Laldingliani Sailo, Chairperson (Centre) Member Sushma Sahu and Member Secretary Preeti Madan

The Health Ministry, which drafted a bill on surrogacy, has agreed to the suggestion of NCW, besides setting up a regulatory body.

The other recommendations by the Commission and experts include maintaining anonymity of surrogate mothers and making provisions for intensive care and medical check-ups for surrogate mothers and banning of commercial surrogacy.

The consultation was attended by the officials from the Home Ministry, Health Ministry, Women and Child Development Ministry, the National Human Rights Commission and representatives of various state governments.

New Member Joins NCW



An IAS officer of 1977 batch of Sikkim cadre, Shri Alok Rawat joined as a Member of the National Commission for Women with effect from 20th October, 2015, afternoon.

A scholar extraordinary, with highest academic degrees from India and abroad, Shri Rawat brings with him a rich reservoir of administrative experience with a variety of postings in his State cadre as well as in the Centre.

He was secretary in the Government of India for more than four years, having worked in the Cabinet Secretariat, Administrative Reforms, Public Grievances and Pensions as well as Secretary in the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation and Union Public Service Commission. In his state cadre, he worked in the field of Planning and Development, Education, Rural Development, Finance, etc.

Shri Rawat was instrumental in ushering in innovative changes and improvements in whichever organisation or department he had worked, including introduction of CNG in public transport buses in Delhi, negotiation for bus services between India and Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, Nepal etc.

He was involved with the usage of 'Adhaar' numbers in pension matters and in the launching of 'Pragati' initiative by the Prime Minister for speedy and effective redressal of public grievances. He also represented the country at the global water fora in Sweden and was involved in streamlining issues relating to Indus Water Treaty with Pakistan.

With his vast and varied administrative experience, Shri Alok Rawat will be an asset to the Commission. We wish him a very successful and productive tenure in NCW.

Important Decisions

- The Central Board of Secondary Education has directed all its schools to make immediate arrangements for providing training on self-defence to every-girl student of Class I to X in view of the rising incidents of sexual assaults and safety concerns. Further, the schools have been asked to earmark at least one period every week to keep girls updated about the knowledge, strategies and skills required to deal with any untoward situation.
- The Supreme Court has directed the Maharashtra Government to permit dance bars in Mumbai, but the court gave a free hand to the authorities to crack down on these performances if they are found to be "remotely expressive of any kind of obscenity in any manner".
- Delhi University has introduced a helpline to offer free counselling sessions to students and faculty members to help them cope with stress. There shall be expert psychologists, therapists and counsellors based at the 'Mind Body Centre' to deal with queries. The toll-free helpline number is 180030007303, where callers can put queries between 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Profile in Courage

A woman constable travelling in a bus thrashed a co-passenger by holding him by his collar for sexually harassing a girl in North Delhi. The entire incident was recorded by another passenger on his cell phone after which the man was dragged out of the bus by other policeman after he apologised to the constable.

The Delhi Police has started operation "Shishtachar", under which, police personnel, including women constables, travel in buses in civvies to nab men ogling or passing comments at women. They are also deployed at crowded places like markets. Those detained in the police station are counselled before they are released.

NCW Intervention

The National Commission for women sought an Action Taken Report from the Chairman of Prasar Bharati Board on complaints of sexual harassment filed by a group of women, who have been working as casual FM presenters (Radio jockeys) with All-India Radio FM.

Members' Visits

❖ NCW Member Laldingliani Sailo was invited to deliver the keynote address at a seminar on “Women as Catalysts of Conflict Resolution in the context of North East people in Delhi & NCR”, organised by the North East Catholic Community of Delhi at St. Xaviers School complex in New Delhi. ● Member Sailo along with Member Rekha Sharma, coordinator Kanchan Khattar, and Shri Nishikant, Director, Shaktivahini, visited brothel No. 64 on G.B. Road to evaluate the living and working conditions of the sex workers. The team deplored the pathetic living condition of the sex workers and felt there was urgent need to rehabilitate them as many wanted to leave the profession but due to social stigma were forced to continue in their profession. ● The Member attended the 50th meeting of the Broadcasting Content Complaints Council at Claridges Hotel in New Delhi. The meeting discussed the complaints received regarding unsavoury portrayal of women in Hindi serials. Hearings were fixed with the officials of Zee Channel, & TV, Z Telugu, Colors etc. for portraying women in a derogatory manner.

❖ NCW Member Sushma Sahu inaugurated the Women Lawyers' Conference on the 'Role of Women in the Changing Society', organised by Bharatheeya Abhibhashaka Parishad at Kochi in Kerala. Speaking on the occasion, the Member emphasised the importance of governmental and social support for women to surge ahead. She reiterated that though women constitute 50% of the total population in India, yet on the socio-economic and political parameters, they lag behind men, despite pro-women constitutional provisions, legislative measures, social policies and beneficial schemes, which is evident from the large number of cases registered daily in the Commission with regard to domestic violence, dowry demand, sexual harassment, trafficking etc. Ms. Sahu emphasised the need for generating awareness among women



Member Sushma Sahu addressing the Lawyers' Conference

by highlighting the rights of women and women-related laws as well as the need for and providing skill development to empower them. ● The Member attended the National Seminar on women entrepreneurs on 'Challenges and Solutions with reference to Small and Medium Enterprises', organised by Akkai Polycraft Association in Lucknow. The seminar inaugurated by the Chairperson of UP State Commission for Women highlighted the following issues - (i) Entrepreneurship, motivation and merits of successful women entrepreneurs; (ii) Role of banks and financial institutions; (iii) Schemes for women entrepreneurs and problems and solution with reference to small and micro enterprises. She emphasised the need for providing training and skill development so that women can be gainfully employed.

❖ Member Rekha Sharma went to Chandigarh and met the DGP and other concerned police officials to discuss a complaint forwarded by the Ministry of WCD through, e-mail. Ms. Sharma immediately talked to the complainant and later went to Chandigarh to discuss her case with the police officers. ● The Member delivered the valedictory address at the national seminar on “Capacity Building among women in India : Entrepreneurship and Estate”, organised by the National Law University, Jodhpur. ● Ms. Sharma visited Lucknow to discuss some complaints received by NCW with the DGP. While discussing the law and order situation in U.P., she urged the DGP to take steps to ensure better safety and security for women. Later, she visited the Shelter Home and Lucknow Jail and interacted with the inmates. After hearing their problems, Ms. Sharma made several suggestions for implementation by the concerned authorities.



Member Rekha Sharma addressing the gathering at Jodhpur

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