



Dr. Jayachandran's
INSTITUTE FOR CIVIL SERVICE EXAMS

SOUTH INDIA'S PREMIER INSTITUTION FOR
PUBLIC POLICY AND CIVIL SERVICE EXAMS

HISTORY

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SOCIAL REFORMS IN BRITISH INDIA

Sati Abolition

Infanticide

Widow Remarriage

Child Marriage

Education of women

Some Legislative measures in Free India



SOCIAL REFORMS IN BRITISH INDIA

Indian society has been plagued with many social problems but certain issues involved women which were,

- * Female Infanticide
- * Lack of education (especially for female)
- * Early Marriage
- * Polygamy
- * Ban of Widow Remarriage
- * Sathi
- * Unequal rights in marriage, divorce and inheritance
- * Parda system

These social issues were persistent to large extent in India then, though they exist to this date. Initial measure to reform them happened during British time.

Social Legislation introduced by British

Sati Abolition

- * The practise of Woman burnt alive on the pyre of dead husband, was prevalent in although India but greatly in Northern India.
- * Bengal regulation passed by William Bentinck in 1829 and Raja Ram Mohan roy was instrumental in it.
- * The legislation legally abolished sati in Bengal which was later followed in Bombay and Madras in 1830.

Infanticide

- * Killing of new born girl children was a practise prevalent all through India and in all class/ caste, but was extensively seen in Upper and High class Bengalis and Rajputs.
- * Regulation act of 1795 and 1804 legally abolished and infanticide was equated to Murder.
- * An act was passed in 1870 that made all parents to register all their babies.

Widow Remarriage

- * Highest agenda of Brahmasamaj was widow remarriage.
- * By the efforts of Eshwar Chandra Vidya Sagar a new act was passed - Hindu Widow Remarriage act 1856. The act legalised remarriage of widows.



- * Vishu sastri pandit founded Widow Remarriage association in 1850.
- * D.K.Karve strongly advocated widow remarriage. Indian Woman University was established in Bombay and a Widow home at Pune.

Child Marriage

- * Child Marriage coupled with ban on widow remarriage made the most inexcusable social problem.
- * Native marriage act 1872 was the first legislative action to prohibit child marriage.
- * Age of consent act 1891 prohibited marriage of children below 12.
- * Sarda act 1930, fixed marriageable age of boys at 18 and girls at 14.
- * Child Marriage restraint act 1978 raised it 21 for men and 18 for girls.

Education of women

- * In 1849 J.D. Bethune started the Bethune school.
- * Pandit Eshwar Chandra vidya sagar started 35 girls schools in Bengal.
- * 1854 Wood's dispatch recommended for Women's education.
- * Indian Women University was started by Karve in 1916 in Bombay.

Some Legislative measures in Free India

- * Special Marriage act 1954 - legalised Inter caste/ inter religious marriages.
- * Hindu succession act 1956 - made inheritance rights of daughter equal to son.
- * Hindu Marriage act 1955 - Polygamy was abolished in Hindus and Divorce was introduced.
- * Maternity benefits act 1961 - gave 3 months as maternity leave.
- * Equal Remuneration act 1972
- * Factories Amendment act 1972 - Established crèches.
- * Suppression of Immoral traffic in woman and girls act 1956
- * Dowry prohibition act 1961 punishment of 2 years that was later raised to 7 years by amendment in 1986.
- * Domestic violence against women act 2005.

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There are many social legislation concerning woman in different categories and many are at different stages of discussion like reservation for women etc. Also many constitutional rights guarantee women rights and benefits.

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