

HANDOUT Module 1/1

CLASS-7 CHAPTER- 5 ; WOMEN CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

Keywords

- **Domestic Violence:** It is the physical and mental violence that women face within their homes.
- **Stereotype:** When we believe that people belonging to a particular religion, community, gender etc. have certain traits and can do only a certain type of work, we are creating a stereotype.
- **Dowry Deaths:** These are the cases of murder of young brides by their husbands and in-laws due to greed for more dowry.
- **Discrimination:** In simple words, it means partiality or bias. When people are not treated equally and with respect, it is called discrimination.
- **Literate:** A person is called literate when he/she can at least write his/her name.
- **Sexual Harassment:** This refers to behavior (either physical or verbal) that is of sexual nature and against the wishes and dignity of a woman.

Women's movement

Now women and girls have a right to go to school. There is a change in the scenario that existed many years ago. This change has not happened overnight. It is a result of the continuous struggle and efforts by women individually and collectively. This struggle is called the Women's Movement. Many women's organizations from different parts of the country as well as individual women are a part of this movement. The movement has the support of many men also. Even in other spheres like legal reforms, violence and health; the condition of women has improved. Various strategies and methods are used for

- Spreading awareness
- Fighting discrimination
- Seeking justice

Some of the strategies are as follows:

Campaigning

Campaigns to oppose discrimination and seek justice are an integral part of the women's movement. The impact of the campaigns is as under:

- **Passing of new laws:** New laws have been passed as a result of the campaigns. In 2006, a law regarding domestic violence was passed. This law gave legal protection to women who faced physical and mental torture at home.
- **Guidelines against sexual harassment:** In 1997, the Supreme Court passed guidelines to protect women from sexual harassment at workplace and within educational institutions.
- **Amendment in dowry laws:** In the 1980s, there was a nationwide campaign against dowry deaths. Women groups spoke against the failure to take action against the people responsible for dowry deaths. They took to streets, approached courts, etc. This issue hence gained importance and became an important matter in the newspapers and in the society, hence leading to changes in the dowry laws.

Raising awareness

The first step in addressing any issue is to raise public awareness about it. The women's movement did the same and spread the message through street plays, songs and public meetings.

Protesting

When any violation against women takes place, the women's movement raises its voice against it. Some popular and effective ways of drawing public attention to injustices are public rallies and demonstrations.

Showing Solidarity

Showing solidarity with other women and causes is also a part of the women's movement.

- Women hold up candles to show solidarity between the people of our country and Pakistan.
- Every year, on August 14, many people gather at Wagah border and hold a cultural programme.
- Candle light vigils; to protest against brutal cruelty shown to women are also very common.

Breaking Stereotypes

- Lakshmi Lakra: 27 – year old Lakshmi Lakra from a poor family in a tribal village in Jharkhand is the first woman engine driver for Northern Railways.
- Ramabai (1858-922): She championed the cause of women's education. She was given the title 'Pandita'. This was because she could read and write Sanskrit. She never went to school. She learnt to read and write from her parents. She set up a Mission (which is still active today) near Pune in 1898 where poor women and widows were encouraged to become literate and independent.
- Rashundari Devi (1800-1890): Her autobiography in Bangla titled Amar Jiban is the first known autobiography written by an Indian woman. She used to secretly take out pages from the books of her son and husband.

She learnt by matching the letters/words with the ones she remembered/heard during the course of her days. Through her own writing, she could express and let the world know about women's lives in those days.

- Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain: She knew how to read and write Urdu but was not allowed to learn Bangla and English. She learnt these with the help of her brother and sister. She became a writer and wrote a remarkable story titled Sultana's Dream in 1905. In 1910, she also started a school for girls in Kolkata, which is still functioning today.

Learning Goals:

- Education in modern times

- Career Opportunities
- Problems of SCs/STs
- Some Social Evils

Schooling and education -The present scenario: Many boys and girls attend school today. But there still remains a difference in the education levels of boys and girls. The drop-out rate of girls is very high especially in rural areas. This is due to the circumstances and the attitude of the family and society wherein girls are expected to take care of the house and their siblings and elders. It is also due to inadequate facilities at school like availability of toilets.

Census	Literate boys and men (%)	Literate girls and women (%)
1960	40	15
2001	76	54

The above table shows that though the number of literate men and women has increased significantly over the years, the gap between the education levels of men and women has not gone away. Providing equal schooling facilities to children from all communities and classes, and particularly girls still continues to be a challenge in our country.

From the data of the Education Survey, GOI 2003-2004 we can conclude that

- Girls from SC and ST category leave school at a higher rate than the other girls.
- The rate at which girls leave school is higher than that of boys.
- The rate of leaving school at the Secondary level i.e. classes 9-10 group; is the highest.

The 2001 census also found that the rate at which Muslim girls leave school is higher than that of Dalit (officially called Scheduled Caste or SC) and Adivasi (officially called Scheduled Tribe or ST) girls. While a non-Muslim girl stays in school for around four years, a Muslim girl leaves school as early as after three years.

Reasons for dropping out of school – Dalit, Adivasi and Muslim communities

- **Lack of proper schools and teachers:** In many parts of our country especially rural and poor areas proper schools and regular teachers are not available.
- **Inaccessible:** If the school is not close to people's homes, and buses or vans are not available for transport, people will not be willing to send their girls to school.
- **Unaffordable:** Many people are poor and unable to afford the cost of education. In such cases boys are given preference and girls are retained at home.
- **Discrimination:** Discrimination and resultant harassment by teachers and classmates is also a reason for dropping out. An example is the Dalit writer, Omprakash Valmiki's experience .
