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PROBLEMS OF OTHER DEPRIVED SECTIONS

In the previous lesson, we have learnt about the problems of two such sections of our society which have been listed by the President of India as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In this lesson, we are going to learn the problems of other deprived sections of our society, viz. the OBC (Other Backward Classes), women and children.

OBJECTIVES

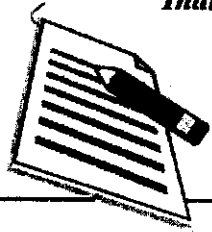
After reading this lesson, you will be able to:

- learn the problems of Other Backward Classes (OBCs);
- learn about the problems of women; and
- learn about the problems of children.

31.1 THE PROBLEM OF CHILDREN

CHILD IS THE FATHER OF MAN. The foundations for life-long learning and human development are laid in the most crucial years of early childhood. An opportunity of early childhood development determines the present and future of a nation. The Constitution of India has laid down certain specific safeguards to ensure their survival, protection and development.

In day-to-day life, you might have seen children going to schools wearing school uniform. On the other hand, you would have also seen children in semi-naked



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state and picking up rags in the street. Their parents never care for their food, clothing and education. Have you ever thought as to why these children do not go to school? The simple reason is that they come from families which are below poverty line. For them, food is more important than education. They can survive without education, but cannot survive without food. They struggle hard to maintain themselves and give some support to their family.

We can state the problem of children under the following sections:

- a) **Girl children:** A girl child has to suffer discriminatory behaviour in our society. Being girl, she is deprived of educational opportunities. The girls may not be enrolled in school. Rather, they are engaged and trained in household works, specially in rural areas. They do not go to school and compromise with their fate as an assistant to mother in the house of father. After marriage, they perform their duty as housewife in the house of husband.

According to a belief prevalent in some sectors, based on myth of our society, the marriage of a daughter must be held before puberty. This belief encouraged child marriage. Child marriage also deprived girls of their educational rights. Child marriage resulted into motherhood at an early age. It created several health problems including early motherhood and maternal mortality.

Another belief prevalent in rural India is that the education of girls creates complexity in the settlement of marriage. As such good number of parents get their daughter married soon after matriculation.

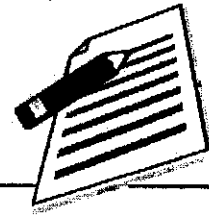
The girls of the poor families have not only to perform work in the house, but they have also to earn wages as maid servant and child labours. They are exploited physically as well as economically by their master, contractors, agents, etc.

The girl children are also sold in poor families of our society. For the poor families, girls are a source of income. Affluent people purchase girls for working as maid servant, kept, and in some cases also as marriage partners.

It is generally said that the period of childhood is full of pleasure. But for the girl children in rural India, it is a period of neglect, abuse, exploitation and oppression. No one looks after the health of a girl. Only when the problem becomes acute, she is taken to a doctor or hospital.

Thus we observe deprivation and discrimination of a girl child in food, education and health care.

- b) **Street Children:** Some children of poor families come to towns and cities in search of work. They do some small work like boot polish, as helpers garages, newspaper hawker, etc. They also find out such work where there is not need



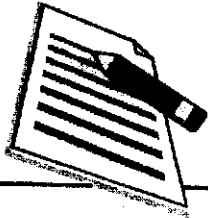
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of any capital, for example rag picking and begging. These children have to face the problem of accommodation. They cannot hire house or rooms in big cities due to high rent. As a result, these children have to spend day and night in the street. So, they are known as street children or rag pickers. Specially during the night, they use public places like railway station, bus stand, garden and park etc. for their stay. According to an estimate, five lakh children live on the street in the cities of Bangalore, Mumbai, Calcutta, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kanpur and Madras.

These street children do not have any guardian to guide or control them. They are free to do anything. As result, they fall victims of intoxicants like Biri, Cigarettes, tobacco, Ganja, Bhang, liquor etc. Intoxicants spoil their health and life. These children also fall victim of sexual exploitation. The street children come in contact with the criminals of the cities. They are trained in picking pockets and stealing goods from the public and crowded places. The street children when caught in connection with crime, are sent to jail. In jail, they come in contact with veteran criminals. In this way, they also become criminals in late life.

From the above account, we come to understand about the following points related to the street children:

1. These children are run away or trapped children.
 2. They are orphans or separated from the families.
 3. These are victims of poverty, illiteracy and malnutrition.
 4. These children are also victims of physical and sexual oppressions.
 5. Their mode of working is disorganized and episodic.
 6. They generally perform unskilled labour.
 7. These children make encroachment on government land and are uprooted time to time.
 8. In bad company, these children start taking liquor and drugs which spoil their health and life.
 9. They are also involved in crimes and are sent to jail.
- c) **Child labour:** You might have seen children earning wages at an age when they are expected to attend school. They belong to age group of 5-14 years. They generally come from families below poverty line. Their parents do not have sufficient means or income to feed and cloth them, so their parents send them to earn wages, in place of sending them to school. They are known as child labours.



The employment areas of these child labour are hotels, domestic servants, carpet industry, dye industry, bangle industry, lac industry, foot-bread industry, leaf plate industry, papad industry, flour industry, biri industry, mines, firework industry and car garage ceramic industry etc.

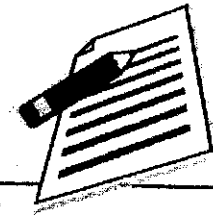
Poverty, illiteracy, absence of earning member in family, exploitation and oppression by land owners, inhuman treatment by parents, temptation to earn more money and buy consumer goods, low payment to parents, no regular work to parents, landlessness etc. are the main reasons behind the persistence of child labour.

The child labour has to face a number of health problems because they have to render labour in unhygienic condition. They are found to be suffering from asthma, T.B., respiratory track infection, burning, arthritis, eye disease, ear disease, skin disease silicosis, neurological problems and sexual diseases. They have also to face the situation of accident and death. The child labour are abused physically by the owners, contractors and agents. They do not resist because they are afraid to lose employment. Frequent sexual abuses make them abnormal.

Child labourers are profitable for the masters because they work peacefully and for more hours per day. Child labourers are paid low wages. They are not paid as per Child Labour Act.

In India, nearly one-third part of the population is represented by the children below 14 years of age. Their number is nearly 30 crores. Our country occupies first position in the number of child labour in the world. But the percentage of the child labour in the total population of the country is only 5.2. In India 88.64 percent child labours are found in rural areas, and 11.36 percent child labourers are found working in urban areas.

Child labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 has considered the child labour to a person who has less than 14 years of age but earns little wages. The Act has prohibited child labour to work in Railways and its campus, Biri making, carpet making, cement production, weaving, dyeing and printing of clothes, preparation of explosive materials, lac industry, soap industry, leather industries and building construction. The Act has decided 6 hours as the maximum hours of service rendered by a child labour per day with a rest period of half an hour. The Act has forbidden services of child labour from 7 P.M. to 8 A.M. In the Act, there is provision of one-day holiday per week. Keeping of employment register and age certificate of child labour have been made mandatory. The offenders are liable to punishment in the form of fine and imprisonment. In case of first time offence, the imprisonment is of two months to one year and a fine of Rs. 10,000 to 20,000 or both. For second time offence, the imprisonment is six months to two years.



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INTEXT QUESTIONS 31.1

Match the following A with B:

- | A | B |
|---|--|
| a. Girl children have to | a. implemented in 1976. |
| b. Girl children in poor families | b. are called child labour |
| c. Street children are | c. suffer from discriminatory
behaviour |
| d. Persons earning wages below
the age of 14 years. | d. are also sold getting money. |
| e. Child labour (prohibition and
Regulation) Act was | e. run away, orphans and
trapped children |

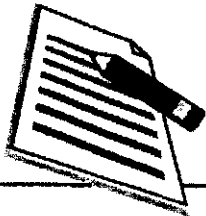
31.2 THE PROBLEM OF WOMEN

In your family you would have such kin as mother, sister and grand mother. After marriage you would have such kin as wife and daughter. These kin are worried on the basis of sex status. In every society, women constitute nearly half the population. It is also true with our Indian society. In our country, male-female ratio as per 1991 census is 929. It means that sex ratio is not balanced. It is unfortunate that women are denied equality with men and are deprived of their rights and freedom.

Women are the custodian of our family traditions and culture. Mothers are the first teacher in the family. In our literature, we find them as incarnation of Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth. But in practice, we find them deprived of the right of inheritance and possession of any kind of property. We hear that wherever women are worshipped, the gods and goddesses reside. But in practice, we find that women are subjected to torture and violence.

We can explain the problem of women under the following sections:

- a) **Gender Discrimination:** Sex is a natural thing. For the continuation of family, lineage, inheritance succession and community the importance of both sexes is equal. But it is unfortunate that sex has been a basis of discrimination in our society. A majority of communities in our country, excepting some tribal groups, are patrilineal. In patrilineal society, lineage, clan, inheritance and succession



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are patrilineal. In this type of family, son continues family name from one generation to the next. Girl is treated as other's property (*Parayadhan*).

Due to different value associated with both sexes, gender discrimination is prevalent in our society. The most unfortunate scene is involvement of women in the discriminatory behaviour against women. Generally birth of son is celebrated. When a woman becomes widow, she does not have that prestige as she had earlier. But when a man becomes widower, he does not lose anything.

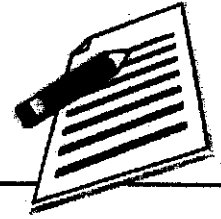
- b) **Domestic violence:** When man and woman are bound together as husband and wife to reproduce children, they lay the foundation of a family. But it is very unfortunate that majority of women have to face the situation of domestic violence. Domestic violence takes place in the form of torture, beating, poisoning, burning, drowning and rape. It is not that domestic violence is prevalent only in rural areas, but it is also prevalent in urban areas. It is found not only in S.Cs, S.Ts and O.B.Cs, but also in the upper castes. So, the incidence of domestic violence on women is above caste religion and region. According to Human Development Report 1995, two-third of the married women has to face domestic violence. The UNICEF Report 2002 puts the number of domestic violence more than that. India has witnessed a 278 percent increase in domestic violence from 1989 to 1999.

In our society, domestic violence on women has existed since time immemorial. But in recent years there has been tremendous increase in domestic violence due to the temptation towards consumer goods. This has added fuel to the incidence of domestic violence.

In order to protect women from the incidence of domestic violence, there is a need to formulate effective Act. Our Government has prepared, protection from the Domestic Violence Bill (2001). But this Bill is being opposed by the women organizations due to weaknesses in the Bill.

- c) **Dowry:** You would have heard the term dowry at the time of marriage in your family or neighbourhood. Dowry is payment in cash and kind to the family of bridegroom by father of bride at the time of marriage. The payment of dowry was prevalent in upper castes previously. But now-a-days, the demand and payment of dowry have entered almost in every section of the society in one form or the other. Modern education has played significant role in increasing the rate of dowry. The more the educated the boy, higher is the demand of dowry. Involvement of women in the demand of dowry is most unfortunate.

Giving dowry on own's will is different from taking dowry by force. Each family has a budget for the marriage of a daughter. Every family has a wish to send its daughter to a family so that she could live happily. But when the



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demand of dowry exceeds its budget, it feels helpless. Another inhuman behaviour is demand of dowry even after marriage.

In our country 4215 dowry deaths were reported in 1989. They have increased to 6699 in 1999. It is very unfortunate that seven thousand married women have to meet dowry deaths each year in our country.

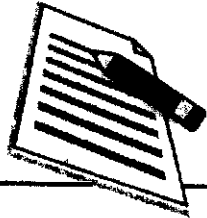
Our Government is fully aware of this unlawful and inhuman behaviour prevalent in our society. The Government has made Dowry Prohibition Act, 1976. According to this Act, giving and taking dowry have been made punishable in the form of fine and punishment. When the Act came into force, some dowry givers and takers were punished. But dowry was not eradicated. In recent years, temptations for wealth and consumer goods have made the demand and payment of dowry more complicated, exploitative and oppressive.

- d) **Exploitation:** Women are subjected to exploitation due to socio-cultural practices and poverty. They are exploited in inheritance, possession of property, disposal of property, ornaments and mode of payment. They cannot sell the property of husband. When she becomes widow, the husband's brothers provide her only food. When she demands a share in the husband's property, she is abused, beaten and in few cases killed, too.

Women belonging to the S.Ts, S.Cs and some O.B.Cs families are major work force in agricultural and unorganized sectors. But they are discriminated in the mode of payment. They do not get equal wages for same types and hours of work. They get less than their male counterparts. They are also not paid as per minimum wages Act revised from time to time by the government.

- e) **Awareness of Legislation for Women:** Our Government was aware of domestic violence, gender discrimination and exploitation of women. Some attempts were also made during the period of British rule in this regard. Sati was prohibited in 1829. Slavery was banned in 1843. Child marriage was forbidden from 1929. Widow Remarriage was legalized in 1856.

After independence, Special Marriage Act, 1954, Hindu Marriage Act 1955, Hindu Succession Act 1956. Termination of Pregnancy Act 1971 and Anti Dowry Act 1976 have been passed to improve the condition of Indian women. The Hindu Marriage Act 1955, legalizes a marriage between Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and Jain. It permits inter-caste marriage, and marriage between relations who are prohibited under traditional Hindu law. It provides right of divorce to wife equally. Hindu Succession Act 1956 provides equal right of inheritance to daughters. Anti Dowry Act 1976 has made giving and taking of dowry punishable offence in the form of fine and punishment. The marriage of girl before 18 years of age is punishable offence. Sexual harassment at work place has been banned by the Supreme Court.



But majority of women of our country do not have knowledge about these Acts. They know some of the Acts, but then are restricted only to the inheritance and succession. The attitude of women towards these Acts is also not positive. Want to provide equal right to women. They want to establish control over women through different prohibitions and taboos. Tardy source of knowledge also comes in the way of exploitation in different forms.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 31.2

Tick True or False for the following:

- i) Daughters enjoy the inheritance and succession rights in patrilineal family. (True / False)
- ii) Domestic violence on women is above caste (True / False).
- iii) Giving and taking dowry is punishable offence as per anti dowry Act 1976. (True / False).
- iv) Women labourers are exploited in mode of payment (True / False).
- v) Majority of women are aware of Act related to prohibition of their exploitation and deprivation of rights (True / False).

31.3 PROBLEMS OF OTHER BACKWARD CLASSES

Do you know who are the Other Backward Classes? In our caste system all castes do not occupy equal position. There are several castes whose position in the caste system was in the middle, i.e. in between higher castes and lower castes. Most of them had traditional occupations. They used to render service to other castes under Jajmani system. They were known as agricultural, trading or artisan castes. All castes whose position in the caste system was below the upper castes but above the lower castes, have been termed, politically and Constitutionally, the Other Backward Classes following the report of the Mandal Commission.

Previously, only Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were given the benefit of 22.5 percent reservation in Central Government jobs. A 27 percent reservation for Other Backward Classes (O.B.Cs) in Central Government Jobs was introduced on the recommendation of Mandal Commission. The demand for the reservation of seats in Government jobs by the O.B.Cs got momentum in early seventies. In 1979 B.P. Mandal Commission was instituted in 1979. The task of this Commission was to identify O.B.Cs and to suggest the percentage of reservation for O.B.Cs in Government jobs. The Commission submitted its report in 1980. The commission

in its report suggested 27 percent reservation of posts in Government jobs for the O.B.Cs. The Commission also identified 3743 castes as O.B.Cs.

The Mandal Commission's report was implemented in 1993 with the concept of (creamy layer). Thereafter, O.B.Cs emerged as powerful political force in our country. They captured power in the states like U.P. and Bihar.

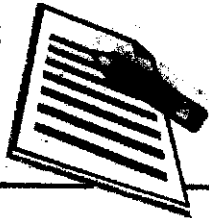
In 1999, the Vajpayee Government has added 127 more castes under the categories of O.B.Cs. Thus, the total number of castes under O.B.Cs has gone upto 3920. It is a reality that the benefits of reservation have been availed more by the castes of Annexure II. So political attempts are being made to divide the castes of O.B.Cs into three categories; namely, most backward, more backward and backward. But this has not been possible as yet.



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We can identify main problems of the O.B.Cs as follows:

- 1. Lack of Interaction:** In villages, O.B.Cs live in separate hamlet. The children of upper castes, do not have interaction with the children of O.B.Cs. There is also no interaction between women of higher castes and O.B.Cs. The younger generation of O.B.Cs take it ill because they are also advanced now economically and educationally. This leads to a conflict between forward castes and backward castes.
- 2. Dependency on Higher Castes:** It is true that the Backward Castes of Annexure. The economically and educationally advanced castes are not dependent on higher castes for their livelihood. But a good number of extremely backward economically and educationally backward casts of Annexure-I are fully dependent upon higher castes for their livelihood especially in rural areas. They work as casual labour. They also render services under jajmani system.
- 3. Problem of Share-cropping:** Undoubtedly, a good number of O.B.Cs of Annexure-II own sufficient land. But it is also true that a majority of O.B.Cs of Annexure-I are marginal and small farmers. They do not have sufficient land for cultivation. They take land from higher castes for share-cropping. They do cultivation by labour of their family members and do the exchange of labour with the neighbouring families for it. But, as share-croppers they have to renew tenancy each year. The declaration of the government to implement Share-Cropping Act (land to tillers) has snatched away even this facility from



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them. The backward – forward caste conflict has also made many O.B.Cs labourers from share-croppers.

4. **Indebtedness:** There is no doubt that the O.B.Cs of second category are well to do. But the O.B.Cs of Annexure-I are poor. They feed and cloth their family members by wage labour and little land they own. Naturally, they are not in a position to meet their various needs from their income. So, they have to take loan from the land owners, or money lenders. They take loan for the purpose of , marriage, festivals, death ritual and feast etc. They have to pay heavy interest on loan. When the loan plus interest is not repaid, they have to repay it by working as bonded labour.
5. **Health and Nutrition:** Majority of castes of O.B.Cs under the Annexure-I live in unhygienic condition. They do not have proper house to live. Their houses do not have urinal, latrine, kitchen, drain and window. In the same room, they live with cow, buffalo and goat. They use street for urinating and defecation. They clean utensils outside their houses. They do not have clean wells and hand pumps for drinking water. Such unhygienic environment affects their health adversely. As they are not well off economically, they are not able to provide nutrition to their body properly. Many of them are below poverty line.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 31.3

Fill in the blanks with suitable words from brackets:

- i) O.B.Cs occupy _____ position in caste system (middle/lower)
- ii) O.B.Cs of Annexure-I are _____ developed economically and educationally (less/more)
- iii) Mandal Commission was instituted in _____ (1979/1989)
- iv) Mandal Commission's report was implemented in _____ (1990/1993)
- v) Majority of O.B.Cs of Annexure-I are _____ (Zamindars / Marginal and small farmers)



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- O.B.Cs occupied a middle position in caste system. They were mostly tenant cultivators and dependent on higher castes. But to day, they have emerged

powerful politically. O.B.Cs of Annexure-I are less developed educationally and economically, so the benefit of reservation is taken away by O.B.Cs of Annexure-II.

- Women constitute nearly half of the population of our society. But in spite of their numerical strength, they are dependent upon men. This dependency leads to their deprivation of rights and freedom. They are subjected to gender discrimination, domestic violence, dowry death, and exploitation.
- Children are backbone of society and childhood is regarded as most joyful stage of life. But poverty has forced a good number of children to survive as street children and child labour. They do not go to school and struggle hard for their survival.



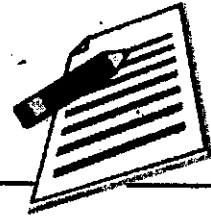
TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. Who are the O.B.Cs? Write about Annexure-I and Annexure-II (200 words).
2. Name five types of gender discriminations prevalent in our society? (200 words)
3. What is dowry? Why it is an evil social practice? (200 words)
4. What is domestic violence? What are causes of domestic violence prevalent in our society? (200 words)
5. Name four problems of girl children (200 words)
6. Who are street children? What are their problems?
7. Who are child labourers?.



ANSWER TO INTTEXT QUESTIONS

- 31.1 a-c, c-e, d-b, e-a
- 31.2 (i) False (ii) True (iii) True (iv) True (v) False
- 31.3 (i) Middle (ii) Less, (iii) 1979 (iv) 1993 (v) marginal and small farmers.



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