



Mains Practice Question

Q. The condition of women in a society is an index of that society's place in civilization. Discuss. (150 words)

30 Mar, 2019 GS Paper 1 Indian Society

Approach

- Introduce by 'opening up' this statement a bit more to provide base for the main body of answer.
- Briefly elaborate the key words and substantiate the points keeping in mind the direction and intent of the answer.
- After putting across the rationale of the statement, move on to condition in India.

Answer

Introduction:

- The condition of any section which has been disadvantaged due to historically formed political-social-economic structures in the society is the actual parameter to judge the society's place in civilization. And hence, the condition of women in any society, who have suffered due to prevalence and legitimization of codes of patriarchy should be used as an index of that society's place in the modern civilization.
- Modern civilization, with its numerous regional variations, is agreed upon by all to be based on the ideals of equality and freedom. And as such, the parochial system of patriarchy and gender based discrimination reflects the inability of the society to break its shackles and move towards gender just society. Notably, modern civilization has not entirely removed parochial patriarchy yet what differentiates it is the understanding to constantly strive towards recognizing and disowning any kind of gender-violence.

Body:

- Indian civilization has accorded varying status to women across its journey in history - from relatively liberal in certain spheres in period before later vedic age followed by general deterioration which set in from later vedic age to its further acceleration and consolidation in medieval and early modern period.
- The political consciousness towards the women issues emerged hand in hand with the social reform movements in 19th century and freedom movement of India and has continued in the post-independent times.
- But even today, Indian society continues to struggle in providing an equal and gender-violence free environment to its women.
- Dowry, 'honor-killing', rapes, relatively lower presence in workforce, domestic violence, female foeticides, harassment at workplace, etc point out to our collective inability to match our actions with the words expressed in our constitution- especially the Fundamental Rights under Article 14, 15(1), 16, and Directive Principles of State Policy under Article 39(d) and 42.
- We are numbered 125 in UNDP's Gender Inequality Index and 108 in WEF's Global Gender Gap Index.
- Yet, the envelope is constantly being pushed. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative, Swadhar greh,

UJJAWALA, legislations to support maternal care, girl education and many others are example of the government initiatives. At the same time, changes in society are also visible - the protests that erupted after Nirbhaya case, cases of quick condemnation of public behaviour denigrating women, the emergence and effect of #MeToo movement, etc.

Conclusion:

Equal status and freedom for women is reflective of not only the ideals of a society but also forms a parameter in performance on the practical HDI parameters like education, health, employment, etc and social health of a society. The quantum of change and the pace in this context may not be satisfactory but the basic thing to note here is that the direction of change is clearly a demonstration of the wider realization that condition of women in a society is an index of that society's place in civilization.

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