



Mains Practice Question

Q. What are the main factors responsible for gender inequality in India? Discuss the contribution of Savitribai Phule in this regard. (UPSC GS-4 Mains 2020)

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Approach

- Start the answer by briefly discussing the about Gender injustice in India.
- Discuss the factors responsible for gender inequality in India.
- Discuss the contribution of Savitribai Phule.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

Even though successive governments have taken several steps to instill gender equality in the post-independence era, gender inequality prevails in all sectors of life like health, education, economics, and politics. This can be reflected in India's 112th rank in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2019-2020.

Body

Factors Responsible for Gender Inequality in India

- **Preference for Sons:** From time immemorial, a girl child has been considered as an unwanted entity and a burden whom the parents would not mind doing away with.
 - Discrimination against women begins even before their birth.
 - The gruesome evils of female feticide and infanticide prove how brutal the world could be to women.
- **Role of Cultural Institutions:** Cultural institutions in India, particularly those of patrilineality (inheritance through male descendants) and patrilocality (married couples living with or near the husband's parents), play a central role in perpetuating gender inequality.
- **Assumed Role of Women:** It is believed in the Indian Society the primary responsibility of taking care of the family and bringing up the child is still on the women.
 - Many women due to family pressures have to retreat from the workforce.
- **Pink-Collarisation of Jobs:** The women are mostly deemed fit for "pink-collar jobs" only, such as teachers, nurses, receptionists, babysitter, lecturers, etc. which have been stereotyped for women. This denies them opportunities in other fields.
- **Discrimination at Work:** Companies are interested in hiring more young women because it has been generally seen that the work and the family environment, marriage, and maternity generally forces a married woman to resign.
 - Women receive a lower amount of wages compared to men for the same work.

Contribution of Savitribai Phule

- Savitribai Phule, the social reformer is considered to be one of India's first modern feminists.
- She along with her husband, Jyotirao Phule, recognized that education was one of the central planks through which women can get liberation from centuries of injustice.
- They went on to found India's first school for girls called Bhide Wada in Pune in 1948.
- Their efforts led to women developing a voice and agency of her own, at a time when women were suppressed and lived a sub-human existence.
- Due to the role Phule played in the field of women's education, she is also considered to be one of the "crusaders of gender justice."
- Through her poems, she advocated values such as humanism, liberty, equality, brotherhood, rationalism, and the importance of education among others.

Conclusion

For India to maintain its position as a global growth leader, more concerted efforts at local, national levels, and by the private sector are needed to bring women to parity with men.

While increasing the representation of women in the public spheres is important and can potentially be attained through some form of affirmative action, an attitudinal shift is essential for women to be considered as equal within their homes and in broader society.

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