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Women as Change Makers

"I alone cannot change the world. But I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples."

- St Mother Teresa

Despite major advances in civil and political rights, our country still has a long way to go in achieving gender equality. The family which is often seen as a source of nurture and care is often a site of violence. Female infanticide, sex selection, wife battering, dowry harassment, incest, trafficking, rape, and many other violent acts are regularly perpetrated within this so-called 'private sphere' of woman's life. Religion, traditions, and

has witnessed four major UN Inter National Conferences on women. Women met at these conferences in Mexico, Copenhagen, Nairobi and finally at Beijing to voice their concern for equal opportunities and build up several Global networks. In spite of such cumulative efforts by women over the last two decades politicians divide women's interest just to scuttle the passing of the women's reservation bill.

The 73rd and 74th amendment in the constitution providing 33 1/3 seats in the Panchayats and Nagarpalikas for women. Through this women at the gross root are empowered also they are participating in the decision making process for their own lives as well as for the community.

The reservation of seats for women alone cannot solve the complex problem of gender injustice. But this can be a initiative to engage women to participate in the process of decision making process. There is need for educational opportunities for women to have the political awareness and effective participation in politics.

We are aware of the women in the scriptures and in the history, literature, education, in politics, cultures and arts, sports, science and social movements who has brought changes in their lives as well as in others. Women-social-activists have raised their voices to address the issues concerning women, children, human rights, environment, etc.

The violation includes physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse. According to the *Indiaspend* analysis as many as 2.24 million crimes against women were reported over the past decade. Crimes against women reported every two minutes.

The feminists empower women all over the world through their writing. Feminism has resulted in empowering women in all aspects of life. They have a dream of creating an inclusive society and sustainable development of women and it is progressing well with lots of support and positive outcome.

Politics they say is not woman's cup of tea; however there have been women who have proved the statement



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wrong. Golda Meir was politician and teacher who was later appointed as Israel's fourth Prime minister. Dilma Rousseff is the first woman president in Brazil. Johanna Sigurdardottir is the first prime minister in Iceland. Razia Sultana became the only woman monarch to have ever ruled Delhi. Independent India has seen various reforms and programmes for the upliftment of women in all communities. Women have taken bold steps in nation building activities, which started with education and have now bloomed into women's involvement in every activity of India. They have participated in all activities such as education, politics, media, art, culture, service sector, science and technology. Likewise we have many powerful women in the world and in Indian history who had proved their ability and leadership qualities. During the independence struggle and after the independence, India have witnessed influential leaders like Sarojini Naidu, Rani Lakshmi Bai, Dr Annie Besant, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Kasturba Gandhi etc. In the past we had powerful and first Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi, and today women chief ministers in different states, IAS, IPS officers, women in India Army, Air, and Navy personnel, and women panchayat leaders at the grassroots level who are carrying out their responsibility in a effectively and efficiently.

Regardless of all the hurdles the women have taken the courageous step to tell the world that we are not going to be the victims but become catalysts by using our capabilities, our potentials, and abilities to change the world. Today we have vibrant social activists specifically Aruna Ray, Medha Patkar, Arundhati Roy and many others safeguarding their rights and fighting for the oppressed. Women are no lesser or inferior to the male partner but equals. ♦



customs have therefore often been used to suppress and violate a woman's basic rights.

The process of liberalisation, globalisation and privatisation have affected the women and their livelihood. Violence in various forms is getting accumulated under the New Economic Policy. Thus the state, far from being the protector and custodian of the rights of its people, has become great violator.

Discrimination, exploitation and struggles have been part of women's life in all phases of their growth and in India. A closer look at the facts reveals that women are impoverished in every sphere of activity not by choice but by systematic exclusion from policy options and protective measures.

From 1975 to 1995 the world