

Study Guide: Empowerment of Women and Weaker Sections

Short-Answer Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each, based on the provided source context.

1. What was the *laatne morcha* and what was its primary objective?
2. Describe the strategy employed by women during the Chipko movement of 1973.
3. What event triggered the anti-liquor movement in Dubuganta village, Andhra Pradesh, in 1992?
4. What was the mandate of the Committee on the Status of Women, established in 1975?
5. What were the key provisions of the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961?
6. How did the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution aim to increase women's political participation?
7. What is the main function of the Family Courts that were established in 1984?
8. How does the Indian Constitution define and protect Scheduled Castes?
9. Explain the circumstances that led to the creation of the Sati (Prevention) Act.
10. What rights does the Constitution grant to minorities to preserve their culture?

Answer Key

1. The *laatne morcha* (rolling pin demonstration) was a demonstration held in Mumbai in 1972, led by socialist leader Mrinal Gore. Women participated to protest the scarcity and rising prices of essential commodities like oil, ghee, and kerosene, especially around the time of Diwali. The movement was successful and demonstrated the united power of women.
2. The Chipko movement was started to prevent the commercial cutting of trees in the Himalayan foothills. Women followed a strategy of holding hands to encircle each tree, physically protecting it by embracing it. This method gave the movement its name and featured large-scale participation from women.
3. The anti-liquor movement in Andhra Pradesh was ignited in 1992 after three youths from Dubuganta village drowned in a lake while inebriated. This tragedy prompted the women of the village to come together and force the closure of local arrack (locally produced alcohol) shops, a movement that soon spread across the entire state.
4. The Committee on the Status of Women, with Dr. Phulrenu Guha as its Chairman, was constituted by the government of India to conduct a comprehensive survey. Its mandate was to examine the social position and status of women, the consequences of constitutional provisions for them, their progress in education, and issues related to their work, wages, and health.
5. The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 made both the giving and taking of dowry a cognizable criminal offense. This law was designed to dismantle the dowry tradition by its roots and encourage a social movement against it. It aimed to alleviate the distress caused to women by this undesirable tradition.
6. The 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution provide for the reservation of one-third of the seats for women in local self-government bodies like Gram Panchayats, municipalities, and municipal corporations. The amendments also

reserve posts such as Sarpanch, Chairman, and Mayor for women, ensuring they have a just share of political power.

7. Family Courts were established to resolve conflicts related to family situations, such as disputes within marriage, domestic problems, alimony, and child care. These courts prioritize mutual understanding and counselors over witnesses and lawyers, with an emphasis on resolving issues quickly but justly.
8. The Indian Constitution, through its 17th paragraph, banned the practice of untouchability and included this class of people in the Scheduled Castes. To facilitate their development and overcome educational and social backwardness, the Constitution provided for reservations for them in education and jobs.
9. The Sati (Prevention) Act was passed in 1988 with stringent provisions following the 1987 death of Roop Kanwar, a married woman who committed *sati*. An investigation by women activists and journalists revealed she was coerced into the act, highlighting that committing or glorifying *sati* were illegal acts.
10. The Constitution gives minorities certain educational and cultural rights to preserve their traditions and develop their language. Minorities have the right to protect their language, culture, and traditions by establishing their own separate educational institutions, and the government implements various schemes for their progress.

Essay Questions

Develop detailed responses to the following prompts, drawing evidence and examples exclusively from the source material.

1. Analyze the role of grassroots movements, such as the *laatne morcha*, the Chipko movement, and the anti-liquor movement, in demonstrating and consolidating "woman power" in post-independence India.
2. Trace the evolution of legal protections for women in India from the 1950s to the 1990s. Discuss the objectives and impact of at least four specific laws mentioned in the text.
3. Examine the significance of the 1975 International Women's Year on the women's movement in India. How did it lead to the formation of new organizations, publications, and a more critical analysis of women's issues?
4. Compare and contrast the social and economic challenges faced by Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Nomadic/De-notified Tribes. How does the Constitution and government policy attempt to address the unique circumstances of each group?
5. Evaluate the relationship between legal reform and social awareness in addressing deep-rooted issues like the dowry system. Using the data and events provided, discuss why the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 had to be amended in 1984.

Glossary of Key Terms, People, and Organizations

Term / Name, Definition

Adivasis, Another term for Scheduled Tribes who live in remote parts of the country and are often economically and socially backward.

Akhil Bharatiya Janavadi Mahila Sanghatana, "An organization established by the Communist Party in 1980 that started a struggle against issues like dowry, female foeticide, and domestic abuse."

Alimony, A fixed amount paid to a married woman for her upkeep by the husband who has divorced her. The right was affirmed by the Supreme Court in the Shah Bano Begum case (1985).

Anti-liquor movement, "A movement started in Andhra Pradesh in 1992 against the drinking of alcohol, which gained support from the anti-arrack movement and led to stricter government policy on alcohol sales."

Arrack, A locally produced alcohol that was the focus of the anti-liquor movement in Andhra Pradesh.

Bhoodan Movement, "A movement started by Vinoba Bhave, based on Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy, which utilized women volunteers to carry its message across India."

Chandiprasad Bhat, "A co-founder of the movement to prevent the cutting of trees in the Himalayas, which evolved into the Chipko movement."

Chipko movement, "A 1973 movement to prevent the commercial felling of trees in the Himalayan foothills, characterized by the strategy of women encircling trees to protect them."

De-notified Tribes, "Tribes that were formerly labeled as ""criminal tribes"" under a British law of 1871. This unjust law was repealed post-independence, and these groups were included under this new classification with special government efforts for their development."

Dowry Prohibition Act (1961), A law that made giving and taking dowry a cognizable criminal offense. It was later amended in 1984 due to the continuing high number of dowry-related deaths.

Dr. Phulrenu Guha, Appointed as the Chairman of the Committee on the Status of Women by the government of India in 1975.

Family Courts (1984), "Courts established to resolve domestic and marriage-related conflicts, prioritizing mutual understanding and counseling over litigation."

Gaura Devi, "An activist who, with the help of Sudesha Devi and Bachani Devi, created awareness among women and played a key role in the Chipko movement."

International Women's Year, "The year 1975, as declared by the United Nations, with the three aspects of the program being peace, development, and equality between men and women."

Jyoti Mhapsekar, "Author of the street play *Mulgi Jhaali Ho*, associated with the Stree-mukti Sangharsha Samiti."

laatne morcha, "The ""rolling pin demonstration"" of 1972 in Mumbai, led by Mrinal Gore, where women protested against rising prices and scarcity of essential goods."

Mahila Dakshata Samiti, "An organization established by Pramila Dandavate in Delhi in 1976, which later opened branches in several other states."

Maternity Benefit Act (1961), A law that gave women the right to get leave from work at the time of childbirth.

Minorities, "A group of people of a particular religion, language, or race who are few in number in a society. The Indian Constitution grants them cultural and educational rights to preserve their traditions."

Mrinal Gore, The socialist leader who led the *laatne morcha* demonstration in Mumbai in 1972.

Nomadic Tribes, "Castes and tribes that move from place to place for their livelihood, often by rearing animals."

Pramila Dandavate, Founder of the Mahila Dakshata Samiti in Delhi in 1976.

Protection of Human Rights Act (1993), "A law enacted to prevent injustice to men and women, leading to the formation of the National Human Rights Commission. It addresses issues like collective oppression and women's safety at workplaces."

Roop Kanwar,"A married woman whose coerced act of sati on September 4, 1987, led to a journalistic investigation and the passing of the stringent Sati (Prevention) Act in 1988."

Sati,An illegal practice where a widow immolates herself on her husband's funeral pyre. The text specifies that committing or glorifying the practice is illegal.

Sati (Prevention) Act,A law with very stringent provisions passed in 1988 to prevent the practice of sati .

Scheduled Castes,A classification in the Indian Constitution for classes that faced the practice of untouchability. The Constitution banned untouchability and provided reservations in education and jobs for this group.

Scheduled Tribes,"A classification in the Indian Constitution for Adivasis, who are often socially and economically backward. They are given representation in law boards, education, and government services."

Sitama Katha,"""Sita's story,"" a narrative used as part of a literacy program in Andhra Pradesh that told of a character who creates awareness to get alcohol banned in her village."

Stree-mukti Sangharsha Samiti,"An organization that held a state-wide conference for women in 1975 and published a manifesto in 1978 adopting a policy of struggle against gender, caste, and varna discrimination."

Streedhan,"A woman's right to her own property, which was recognized by the law enacted in 1952."

Sunderlal Bahuguna,"A co-founder of the movement to prevent the cutting of trees in the Himalayas, which evolved into the Chipko movement."

Telangana Peasants Armed Struggle,"A struggle that challenged the rule of the nizams and the feudal system, in which women played a significant role and found freedom from bonded labour."

Vidya Bal,"Founder of periodicals Nari Samata Manch and Milun Saryajani , which were helpful in dealing with women's issues."

Vinoba Bhave,"The leader who started the Bhoodan Movement and utilized ""woman power"" by having women volunteers spread its message."

Women's Studies Centres,"Academic centers started at universities like SNDT Women's University, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Savitribai Phule Pune University, and Shivaji University that played a role in the critical analysis of women's issues."