

# INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

## REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE OF WOMEN: A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT

### INTRODUCTION

India is known all over the world as the largest democracy, but the backwardness of women in India is clearly visible in the society. From being considered as goddess to pushed into household space to participating in freedom movement and resurfacing as the super woman today, the journey of women in India has been dynamic. In India there are numerous personal, social and political structure that works against women. Large number of women are downtrodden in society and their homes. Many women in India do not even have a right to formulate their opinion independently. In the Indian society, mostly husband is considered as the voice of a married woman. In such a scenario, the question about reproductive choice of women is terrifying.

According to UNICEF India and World Bank data, India is one of the countries with the highest number of maternal deaths worldwide. In 2017, India witnessed 35,000 maternal deaths. Recent studies have shown that half the pregnancies in India are unintended and about a third result in abortion. Only 22% of abortions are done through public or private health facilities. There is lack of access to safe abortion clinics and the stigma and attitude against the young, unmarried women seeking abortion contributes to this. Many doctors refuse to perform abortions on young women or demand that consent from parents or spouse is necessary even though the law does not require it. Due to this also many women opt for unsafe methods of abortions. It is in such a scenario that the question of reproductive rights of women is most prevalent. Unfortunately, recognition of sexual and reproductive rights of women in India are looked in the context of selective issues like child marriage, female feticide, sex selection and menstrual health and hygiene issues.

“Reproductive rights embrace certain human rights that are already recognized in national laws, international laws and international human rights documents and other consensus documents. These rights rest on the recognition of the basic rights of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. It also includes the right to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence, as expressed in human rights documents.”

Indian courts in the last decade have in many cases recognized women's reproductive rights as the "non-negotiable survival rights" under the fundamental right to life. For the first time court has acknowledged reproductive rights essential for equality of women and have called for respect for women's rights to autonomy and decision-making concerning pregnancy. In cases spanning maternal health, contraception, abortion, and child marriage, Indian courts have adopted robust definitions of "reproductive rights" that reflect human rights standards. But even then, reproductive rights of women are a topic that is still considered a taboo to be discussed in public.

Although India was among the first countries in the world to develop legal and policy frameworks guaranteeing access to abortion and contraception, women and girls continue to experience significant barriers to full enjoyment of their reproductive rights, including poor quality health services and denial of women and girls decision-making authority. Historically reproductive health related laws and policies in India have failed to take a women's rights-based approach, instead focusing on demographic targets, such as population control while also implicitly or explicitly undermining women's reproductive autonomy through prejudiced provision such as spousal consent requirements for access to reproductive health services.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONFERENCE:**

One of the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations is to guarantee equal rights for men and women. Globally, gender equality has been considered as a basic human right that has to be protected and guaranteed by all the States. Only through a thorough knowledge of social dynamics, economic structure, family and social life it is possible to safeguard the human rights of women. The intend of the Conference is to sensitize the community and women about equal rights and reproductive choices that are available to women as part of basic human rights.

Internationally, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) have emphasized several times that right to health of a woman includes their reproductive and sexual health and States have an obligation to protect these rights. Unfortunately, women's reproductive rights and sexual rights are not even recognized in most places. It is often due to the deep-rooted beliefs and religious customs in certain regions the preference for a son is still in existence. As a result of which repeated pregnancies closely spaced together to produce a male offspring have adverse impact on the health of women. In many regions, women are also blamed for infertility for which they are excluded from the community and subjected to human rights violations.

It is in this scenario that a general awareness on the basic human rights of women with special focus on reproductive rights is necessary. Only by educating at the grass root level we will be able to build a society that respects, protects and guarantees basic human rights to its women.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE CONFERENCE**

- To create awareness in the grass root level that reproductive rights are fundamental human rights.
- To build a platform for open discussion regarding reproductive health of women.

## **EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THE CONFERENCE:**

- 1) Creating awareness
- 2) A report suggesting policy reforms
- 3) Plan more schemes, projects relating to welfare and empowerment of women
- 4) Generate suggestions for reforms and better implementation.

Scholars are invited to send abstracts and papers to present their perspectives on the following themes or topics:

## **THEMES/ TOPICS**

**SESSION I:** Socio-political analysis of reproductive rights of women in India

**SESSION II:** Reproductive choice of women as a fundamental right - a legal & constitutional analysis

**SESSION III:** Global perspective on reproductive rights of women

**SESSION IV:** Feminist jurisprudence on reproductive rights of women

The above-mentioned sub themes are not exhaustive in nature and other related auxiliary sub themes can also be included.

## **GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION**

- The abstract should not exceed 300 words and must include keywords. Abstracts received on or before 30<sup>th</sup> October 2021 shall be published in the seminar proceedings
- The length of the full paper shall be between 5000 to 8000 words (excluding footnotes).
- Full paper should be submitted on or before 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2021.

- Selected full papers presented in the Conference shall be published in a book by December 2021.
- In case of co-authorship (maximum two), each author will have to register separately by paying the registration fee. The certificate will be given only to registered author.

## FORMATTING GUIDELINES

- Abstracts in Times New Roman font, with size 12pt and line spacing 1, with key words at the end of abstract in italics.
- All submissions must follow the Bluebook (20th Edition) style of citation; non-conformity will be a ground for rejection.
- Submissions must be in Times New Roman font, with size 12pt and line spacing 1.5.
- All footnotes must be in Times New Roman font, with size 10pt and line spacing 1.
- Title of the Paper- Times New Roman Font, size 14pt.
- The authors name should be mentioned on the Right side of title in Times New Roman Font, 12pt size. All other details like designation, institution details, E-mail address and phone numbers etc., should be given as foot note.
- Submissions must be made in .doc/.doc formats only. All the abstracts shall be mailed to [mgclcwl@mgcl.ac.in](mailto:mgclcwl@mgcl.ac.in)

## REGISTRATION FEE

Participants can register after payment of a registration fee. Only registered participants will receive a certificate. This is the registration link <https://forms.gle/niUvjmsNb4Wvpqnr8>

- Click the fee payment link.  
<https://feebook.southindianbank.com/FeeBookUser/org?id=295>
- Enter the necessary details
- Click pay and make payment.
- After making payment, download the payment receipt.
- Click the registration-form link and fill the relevant details.
- Upload the fee receipt. Submit the form.

The registration Rs. 500/- for all participants. Co-authors should also register. Fees can be paid via online, using the link below

Alternatively, fees can be paid into the following account:

**Director, Mar Gregorios College of Law**

Account number : **0483053000019621**

IFSC Code : **SIBL0000483**

Bank Name and Branch : **South Indian Bank, Nalanchira**

**Please make sure that the fee receipt is uploaded in the registration form.**