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Q7(a)

Despite gains from the women's gender movement and states policy of women empowerment, gender equality is far from achieved. Identify two major challenges the prevent this goal from being reached

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2017 · Sociology GS 2 · 20 marks · Social Movements in Modern India

Social Movements in Modern India: Peasants and farmers movements; Women's movement; Backward classes and Dalit movement; Environmental movements; Ethnicity and Identity movements.

Core demand of the question

- Despite gains from the women's gender movement and the state's policy of women empowerment, gender equality is far from achieved. Identify two major challenges that prevent this goal from being reached
- Treat as a 20-mark answer

Revision summary

Law, reservation, and movements produced real but limited gains.

Patrilineal property and unpaid care keep women economically second.

Violence and honour police bodies in home and public domain.

Caste and class split the category 'women'.

Equality needs land, wages, and safety, not only schemes.

Introduction

Women's movements and state policy have won law, seats, and some school gains. Equality still fails in everyday power. Two major challenges are the material kinship order of property and unpaid work, and the violence-plus-honour regime that polices women's bodies in home and street.

Body

Challenge one: property, work, and Seed and Earth

- Leela Dube's **Seed and Earth** still names the child and the field as male. Daughters leave; land stays.
- Succession amendments and panchayat reservation are state empowerment tools. Brothers, in-laws, and village records often recapture them.
- Unpaid care and informal labour keep women as secondary earners even when GDP counts 'inclusion'.
- **A. R. Desai's class path matters:** poor women work more and own less. Middle-class women may work and still not command the house.

Challenge two: violence and public honour

- Domestic violence, dowry death, and public assault teach that equality is a paper creed, Beteille's disharmony in gendered form.
- Movements named these harms. Police, khap, and campus cultures still restore male honour.
- **Political representation can be proxy:** a sarpanch pati sits behind a reserved chair.

Why movements and policy were not enough

- Policy often means schemes, not a fight with the joint family corporation.
- Movements are split by caste and class; Savarna leadership and Dalit women's labour do not share one experience.
- Yogendra Singh's modernisation of tradition absorbs feminism as a style while endogamy continues.

What would dent the two challenges

- Enforceable land and wage, not only certificates.
- Accountable policing and a culture that does not treat the moving woman as trespass.

Flow diagram

Movement and state policy -> Legal gains

Property unpaid work -> Block equality

Honour violence -> Block equality

Legal gains -> Block equality

Conclusion

Two major challenges are patriarchal property-and-care arrangements, and honour violence that punishes equality in practice. Movements and the state opened the door. Kinship materiality and male honour still hold it. Gender equality waits on those two locks.

Facts & figures

Hindu succession amendments

Paper equality in coparcenary that practice often returns to brothers.

Sarpanch pati

Proxy rule that shows political reservation without power.

Seed and Earth

Kinship ideology that movements hit and households restore.

Domestic violence law

A movement-won statute whose use still depends on family and police.

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