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Q5(a)

Discuss Law as an important instrument for women's empowerment.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 marks · Perspectives on the study of Indian society
Perspectives on the study of Indian society: Indology (G.S. Ghurye); Structural functionalism (M.N. Srinivas); Marxist sociology (A.R. Desai).

Core demand of the question

- Discuss Law as an important instrument for women's empowerment
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Law names women's rights in property, the body, work and office.

Succession reform and **panchayat reservation** are key instruments.

Patriarchy in land and informal labour limits delivery.

Dube's kinship ideology explains resistance in the home.

Law is necessary and not sufficient.

Introduction

Law is a public language of equality that can puncture household patriarchy. It does not by itself free women. It is still a central instrument because it names rights that custom denies.

Body**What law can do**

- The Constitution, **Hindu succession amendments**, and workplace sexual harassment law give daughters and workers a title to claim, which Leela Dube's **Seed and Earth** ideology does not grant.
- Criminal law on dowry death, domestic violence, and rape makes private harm a public offence.
- Political reservation in panchayats has put women in office, a disharmonic opening in Beteille's sense: equality as value against ranked kinship.

Limits

- Land records and village honour often keep title with brothers, so agrarian patriarchy absorbs statutes.
- Informal work leaves many women outside labour law.
- Implementation depends on police, courts, and family, which may restore the seed line.

Sociological use

- Yogendra Singh would call law a heterogenetic modernizing force. Empowerment needs land, wages, and organisation as well.

Flow diagram

Equalising law -> Rights in property body office

Household honour -> Block implementation

Equalising law -> Empowerment if enforced

Conclusion

Law is an important instrument of women's empowerment because it converts equality into a justiciable claim. It works when records, wages, and movement support it, not when it stands alone against **Seed and Earth**.

Facts & figures

Hindu Succession amendments

Gave daughters coparcenary rights, a direct legal strike at the seed line in property.

Panchayat reservation

Reserved seats that put women into local office despite household control attempts.

Domestic violence law

Treats the home as a site of rights, not only of family honour.

Seed and Earth

Dube's idiom that law must fight if daughters are to be heirs, not only fields.