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## Welcome to ISRJ

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## HISTORY OF EARLY LEGISLATIONS FOR WOMEN CARE IN MADRAS PRESIDENCY

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### Abstract:

*This paper highlights the women care measures undertaken by the Central Legislative council to the whole of British India and by the Madras Legislative council to Madras Presidency till 1937 when provincial autonomy under the Government of India Act, 1935, came into operation. These councils had enacted some laws to assign some rights for women and to care for their well beings against uncivilized barbaric customs which were once the rules in Madras Presidency as in all other states of the British India. Legislations enacted by these councils rooted out the social evils of child marriage, slavery, inequality of women to men and immoral traffic of women in the society and they laid strong foundations for women's right today.*

### KEYWORDS:

Legislations , Presidency , History , Administrative.

### INTRODUCTION:

Madras Presidency, which was one of the administrative provinces of the East India Company and then of the British Crown in between 1653 and 1947AD, consisted of all the areas of present Tamilnadu (except Kanyakumari district), Malabar of Kerala, Karnataka state, Nellore, Guntur and Ellore of Andhra Pradesh, and Jaypore and Chithrapore districts of Orissa.<sup>1</sup> As in other states of India, here too there was no legislature in uncivilized society wherein each and every man or woman was liable to be attacked in person or property at any time by any one, so that the law of the survival of fittest, as in wild life, seemed to be the natural rule of humans. There was no justice and regulations in the primitive societies, which of course remained as small tribes near the river banks where enough water was available for their basic necessities, even after the days of Manu who had authored the Jurisprudence "Manu Smruthi" in Sanskrit to reveal the rules and regulations to be obeyed by the Kings and Public for their communal wellbeing.<sup>2</sup> In the category of crimes, Manu has not recognized assault, cheating, adultery, rape and other activities against women as real crimes and the same pattern has also been followed in "Sukraneethi" written by the guru Sukirachariyar after the days of Manu.<sup>3</sup> In fact, no importance was given to protect women's rights and to prevent brutality against them in those days since both the early legislations neglected women's birth rights. The Kings who obeyed the laws of Manu and Sukirachariyar administered justice in the country by inquiring cases in the Royal Courts and, if busy, the matter was entrusted to the chief administrative officer called Thalamai Amaichar. Even if the Kings protected their subjects from crimes committed against them and the subjects in return owed them allegiance and paid them revenue, there was lot of inequality, bias, preconception and jaundiced eye while settling the disputes.<sup>4</sup>

The earlier system of jurisdiction was thrown out from the Madras Presidency for the first time when the East India Company, according to a Charter of 1683 of Charles II, had established the Court of Judicature in Madras in 1683 to settle the criminal disputes between alleged groups and company.<sup>5</sup> In 1687, another Charter was granted to the East India Company, by which a Mayor and Corporation were established at Fort St. George, Madras, in order to settle small criminal disputes, and by which Englishmen

who came to India were entrusted with the administration of justice in both civil as well as criminal cases.<sup>6</sup> In these courts, the powers exercised by the authorities were very arbitrary so that strange charges were framed and strange punishments were inflicted even for petty cases. In 1753, another Charter was passed, under which Mayor was not empowered to try suits between Indians, as the King Charles felt that English Law was no more applicable to Indians and that Indians were left to be governed by their own laws and customs. When the Lord Warren Hastings first established Foudari Adalat for the proper administration of criminal justice in every district of British India in 1772, such district courts were initiated in each district of Madras Presidency too. In these courts, Europeans had no connection nor did they interfere with the administration of justice while trying the criminal offences.<sup>7</sup> The Kazi, also called Mufti, sat in the court to expound the law and determined how far criminals were guilty of the offence charged according to the Mohamedian Law which was once believed to be equal to the Hindu Law. The collector of each district was ordered to exercise general supervision over their procedure. The laws enacted by the Central Legislative Council and Madras Legislative Council were implemented in the Presidency through district courts, police force and other administrative bodies. The administration of courts in Madras Presidency was regulated by passing 250 regulating acts in time between 1800 and 1834.<sup>8</sup>

In the early 1833 AD, Macaulay moved the House of Commons in the Great Britain to codify a universal criminal law to the whole of India for bringing about uniformity in all the courts and affirmed that since Mohamadeans in Madras and Calcutta were governed by Koran and since Hindus in Bombay Presidency were governed by the laws of Manu, Kazis and Pandits were to be consulted on points of law while referring cases and in most cases the decision of the courts were arbitrary.<sup>9</sup> On hearing this, the British Crown passed the Charter Act, 1833, which introduced a single legislature for the whole of British India and under which the legislature had the power to legislate for Hindus and Muslims alike for the Presidency towns as well as districts. Accordingly, the first Law Commission, which was headed by Lord Macaulay as the President and Macleod, Anderson and Millet as commissioners, was constituted to prepare the Indian Penal Code from English law, Indian laws and regulations of Manu, Livingstone's code, Louisiana Code and the Code of Napoleon.<sup>10</sup> The Law Commission prepared its draft version and submitted it to the Governor-General of the Council on October 14, 1837 and also enacted some other laws to safeguard the Company as well as local people from the criminal activities.

#### WOMEN CARE MEASURES OF CENTRAL LEGISLATIONS

In the ancient customs women were considered as the property of men – father, brothers, husband or son – because of the belief that men had to be superior to women in the society and that women had to be protected against gender violence such as rape, kidnap and slavery, which were more frequent in the primitive society.<sup>11</sup> Because of the subordinate status of women, several men who didn't care of women enjoyed the this social sanction and committed violence such as blowing of varying intensity, burning, sexual abuse and rape, insults, humiliations, coercion, blackmail, economic and emotional threats and control over speech and action to dominate women. Therefore, the social evils such as Sati, caste disability, slave trade, sale of wife, infanticide, child marriage, child sexual abuse, child prostitution, child labour, dowry harassment, sexual harassment at work and eve teasing were so intense in the society.<sup>12</sup> The British Government had abolished several gender violence against women by enacting suitable laws.

#### ABOLITION OF SATI

In the primitive society in which widow remarriage was not sanctioned but widower was allowed to remarry, the widow was forced to burn herself on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband or was buried alive along with a goat and the pyre. Even girls below 16 and pregnant women were not exempted from this self sacrifice. This self-immolation by widows was the popular Sati which was very common among the people of the Bengal Presidency. Having seen his sister-in-law who was forced to commit Sati after death of her husband in 1812, the social reformer Raja Rammohan Roy started a campaign to fight against Sati in Bengal. It is worth to note that there were 7941 Sati incidents within the duration of 1913-1928, which accounted the average of 507-567 incidents per year, and was ten times higher than that in other provinces of the British India.<sup>13</sup> Since Raja Rammohan Roy urged William Bentinck, who was the Governor-General of India at that time, to declare Sati as an illegal practice liable to severe punishment, on the Government side facts regarding the Sati cases and their feedbacks were collected from army officers, judges and superintendents of police of all the provinces under British India and the Regulation No. XVII of December 1829, also known as Sati Abolition Act 1929, which declared that practice of Sati is illegal and punishable under criminal courts, was passed to suppress this inhumane crime in the society.<sup>14</sup> Though this act was initially enacted for the Bengal Presidency, it was implemented in all the presidencies according to the

Charter Act of 1797, which implied that the acts passed by the Governor-General is applicable to all the territories of British India, due to the occurrence of similar situations there too.<sup>15</sup> Madras Presidency was not an exemption to the practice of Sati and therein it was popularly called Udakattai: the widows of Anuppan caste in Tirunelveli, Madurai and Coimbatore district had committed Sati by burying themselves along with a live goat for several decades<sup>16</sup>; widows of Dhasari caste had committed Sati in Vizagapatnam district, Ananthapur and North Arcot districts<sup>17</sup>; widows of Nambuthiris in the Malabar region, which was once the part of Madras Presidency, had a tendency to throw her marriage ornaments and cloths on the funeral pyre, which may probably the symbol of Sati practice<sup>18</sup>; Mysore census Report, 1891, reveals that many men belonged to Lambadi caste died in a war between two groups in Punganur and Palmaneer in North Arcot district but two of their wives committed Sati and worshipped as Sakti Goddess<sup>19</sup>; and the widows of Perike women frequently had committed Sati on the death of their husbands in ancient times and their names have been respected by most people even today<sup>20</sup>. Because of the enforcement of this act, Sati was almost abolished in Madras Presidency, which was witnessed by the census 1901, 1911 and 1921 that didn't hold a place for Sati.

#### ABOLITION OF SLAVERY AND SLAVE TRADE

Right from the beginning of Vedic era, slavery seemed to have occupied an important place in the primitive culture of India, where rich people, merchants and Kings captured or purchased people from one country and sold them to any one who afforded higher price to them.<sup>21</sup> Men slaves were employed to carry corpse, farming works, clean human excreta and other inferior jobs for food while female slaves were put in childcare, household works and the like. Young women slaves fetched higher market price than the skilled male constructive workers and the masters who purchased them were very cruel to them by forcing them to stand in nudity, hurting, abusing and sexual harassing. The Dutch and East India Companies had mediated the sale of Indian slaves captured from Malabar, Coromandel, Bengal and Madras to Malaysia, Indonesia, New Guinea and Philippines through sea-trade.<sup>22</sup> Of these, Coromandel<sup>23</sup> seemed to be the main centre of sporadic slave trade in the seventeenth century because of the reason that famine and frequent war threats between Dutch and Native Kings had urged people to sell themselves as slaves to rich people or merchants who had engaged in slave trading, and that Dutch army captured the people from the defeated regions as slaves and put them as a commodity to sale.<sup>24</sup> It was found that about 1900 slaves were shipped from the Coromandel ports like Pulicat and Devanampatnam in 1622-23, 15,000 slaves were sent to Pijapur from Thanjavur in 1645, 2118 slaves were shipped from Thondi, Adirampatnam and Kayalpatnam ports of Coromandel to Batavia in 1646, between 1659 and 1661 the company purchased 8000-10,000 slaves from Thanjavur and exported them to Ceylon, Batavia and Malacca, 1839 slaves were shipped from Madurai coasts in 1673-77, in 1678 thousands of girls and boys were shipped from Nagapatnam port, in 1687 about 665 slaves were sent to Ceylon from Fort. St. George by the East India Company and in 1694-96 a total of 3859 slaves was shipped to Ceylon by individual traders. <sup>22, 24, 25, 26</sup> According to Police reports, nearly 8,000,000 – 9,000,000 slaves, of which nearly 3000,000 were women and 21,0000 were children, were exported to other countries from all over the India and the British crown felt that slave trade should be checked in time to keep the native people in India.<sup>27</sup> In 1833, the Slavery Abolition Act, 1833, was passed by the British Government but British India was exempted in that act and the exemption was removed in 1843 by the Indian Slave Trade Act, 1843, by which any person who caused or caught or bought and sold any person with trade motif would be punished severely.<sup>28</sup> After the enforcement of this act, slavery and slave trade had been lowered to a great extent.<sup>29</sup> The sections 367, 370 and 371 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, also provide a check for the trade of slaves and women from India to any other parts of the country.<sup>30</sup> According to the IPC sections 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372 and 373, kidnapping or abducting of any women, importing or exporting of any girl under the age of 21 years, buying and selling of any female slaves and keeping girls under the age of 18 years, with the intension to marry or seduce her, are punishable crimes, for which the person may be punishable with imprisonment for up to 10 years or shall be liable to fine or both. All Indian women got the real benefit from the law in terms of protection.

#### WIDOW REMARRIAGE

Remarriage was once unused to widows of upper caste Hindus because of the credence that it is the duty of a woman to go after her husband and that remarriage is a sin that excludes the woman from the heaven. While the Barama Samaj debated the question of widow remarriage among the Brahmans, Pt. Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar (1820-91), who confirmed the occurrence of widow marriage in vedic text, sent a petition signed by 987 person to the Governor-General of India urging for legislative action. What was its consequence was the Hindu-remarriage Act (Act XV of 1856) which legalized marriage of widows

and declared issues from such marriage as legitimate.<sup>31</sup> Whereupon remarriage of young widows, who had no children, gradually became a tradition in the society in Bengal and Madras Presidencies, but widows who had children were led an ascetic life by wearing restrictive dresses, eating pitiable meals and denying social and religious festivals even in the early 1901s.<sup>32</sup> The section 2 of the Hindu Marriage act, 1856, legalized the inheritance of the property of her deceased husband to re-married widows, if she already had children from her first husband, whereas if she had no child from her first husband, the re-married woman had lost all the rights on the properties of her deceased husband.<sup>33</sup> Thus this law legalized the widow re-marriage and at the same time resolved the problems associated with remarriage of once married women.

#### **FEMALE EDUCATION**

In the 19th century, the people of Madras presidency, as seen in other Provinces, didn't encourage female education since they thought of that the immediate duty of a woman is to produce and grow up children, and since there was poor opportunity for educated women in the society to appreciate them; only a few women had studied Tamil literatures and folk songs for recreation.<sup>34</sup> Charles Wood's dispatch on education (1854) gave much impetus for female education in Bengal, Madras and Bombay Presidencies and stressed that female education would be the grassroots for democracy in these three Presidencies.<sup>35</sup> However, the educational policy of 1854 was least successful in the Madras Presidency due to inadequate financial assistance from the Governor-General of India and the Provincial Government could not spend money from its revenue for education until 1870 when Lord Mayo introduced administrative decentralization which provided some rights to the provincial Government's Committee for taking essential activities for education.<sup>36</sup> While the Indian Universities Act, 1904, of the Government of India ensured enough rights to the Provinces for establishing new Universities and schools for primary and secondary education, it promoted education for girls by granting stipends. According to 1911 census<sup>37</sup>, the literacy rate of Madras Presidency was increased from 11.9% males and only 0.9% females in 1901 to 13.8% males and 1.3% females in 1911, which was further increased to 34.5% males and 13% females in 1921.<sup>38</sup> Since then the literacy rate of female education has been increasing in Madras Presidency every year.

#### **FEMALE INFANTICIDE AND EXPOSURE**

Female infanticide and exposure, though they were not so predominant as in Bengal, were yet other horrible and cruel rites in some parts of Madras presidency because of the impacts of frequent famines and other natural and human hazards which of course made the human livelihoods very difficult to sustain. These practices seemed to occur in Madurai, Salem, Nilgris, and North Arcot districts of Madras Presidency.<sup>39</sup> The Indian Penal Code, 1860, by its sections 312, 313, 314 and 315, punishes any person who causes or does miscarriage of women, without the intension of saving her life, with imprisonment for seven years or fine or both, which was the initial measure to prevent female infanticide in the society.<sup>40</sup> The IPC section 317 prevents the exposure or abandonment of any child under 12 years of age by punishing the parents or guardians who are responsible for that activity.<sup>41</sup> Even after the enforcement of IPC, there had been some incidents of infanticide in Madurai and North Arcot districts so that an act of 1870 was passed and made it compulsory for the parents to register the birth of babies and providing it for verification of female babies some years after birth. It provided a strong protection for female infants against infanticide before and after birth.<sup>42</sup> A report of India Today reveals that in 1986 female infanticide was exploited here and there in the rural parts of Madurai district, which of course designates the fact that the actual attitude of rural people towards the female infanticide was not properly wiped out even after the enforcement of the Indian Constitution.<sup>43</sup>

#### **ABOLITION OF CHILD MARRIAGE**

Some social reformers in Bengal felt that most of the widowhood was due to child marriage and stressed the Governor-General to restrict child marriage by legislation, so that the Native Remarriage Act II, 1872, which fixed the marriage age for girls at 14 and for boys at 18, was enacted by the Government as a way to dispose the early widowhood of women.<sup>44</sup> This act was implemented in the Madras Presidency also, but it remained in silence for many years as it could not change the general attitude of native people.<sup>45</sup> In Madras Presidency, the marriages for girls were most often performed at the age of 12 years as fixed by Special Marriage Bill, 1891. According to the census 1891, nearly 5% of Brahmin girls and one per cent of other girls in Madras Presidency got married at or below the age of 10 years and 3.3% of the girls became widows within 14-15 years. In 1927, early marriage of high Caste Hindu girls was hotly debated in the

second session of the Legislative Assembly because of the reason that Catherine Mayo in her book entitled "Mother India" had exploited the sexual habit of Hindus by asserting that husbands most often raped their sexually immature wives in the name of Hindu Customs and also correlating prostitution with the Hindu religious practice.<sup>46</sup> As a consequence, the law makers in the Legislative Assembly felt that Mayo's conclusions would not be condemned unless they passed a Bill relating to child marriage restriction. The Child Marriage Restrain Act, 1929, (19 of 1929) fixed the marriage age for girls at 18 and for boys at 21, and punished males who married girls at the age of 18 years or younger and the parents who compelled the minor girls to marry a male of higher ages.<sup>47</sup> This law brought forth some satisfactions to the social reformers who intended to dispose of the problems of child marriage in the society.<sup>48</sup>

### SEXUAL THREATS TO WOMEN

The Indian Penal Code, 1860, for the first time, had dealt specially with offences and for what matters a person would be excused or charged depending on the nature of criminal activity he had committed to others. It provided a strong protection to safeguard women from almost all kinds of violence, including sexual assaults and threats, by any man, irrespective of their social status. Women in the Colonial Era and Pre-colonial Era suffered very much from sexual tortures from rich men, land lords and fellow men in the society.<sup>49</sup> The IPC sections 497 and 498 punish any person, who had taken a married woman or a wife of any body with a criminal intent or sexual intercourse with her, with imprisonment for 3 – 5 years or with fine or both.<sup>50</sup> Its section 493 punishes co-habitation by any man who made a woman to believe that she will be married to him. According to sections 497, enticing away any woman from her husband or guardian for sexual intercourse or with the intent of criminal activity is an offence, for which the person may be imprisoned for two years or charged with a fine or both. The section 496 punishes person, who caused or done fraudulent mock-marriage with any woman, with seven years imprisonment or fine or both. According to IPC section 509, insulting the modesty of a woman by uttering any word or sound or gesture or exhibiting any object that affects the privy of the woman is a punishable crime, for which the person may be imprisoned for one year or charged with a fine or both. According to an official record, even though many such incidents had occurred in the Madras Presidency, an average of 155-202 cases was reported to police every year, of which 21-38 cases were concerned with taking married women, 30- 45 cases were concerned with co-habitation, 34-65 cases were concerned with enticing women, 30-51 were concerned with mock-marriage and 40-65 cases were concerned with insulting the women's modesty.<sup>51</sup>

### VOTING RIGHTS FOR WOMEN

In 1917, Lord Edwin Montague, who was the Secretary of State for India, and the Viceroy Lord Chelmsford organized a committee with a view to survey the political scenario of agitations for independence in India and to find out an alternative to wipe out the idea of independence from the minds of people, which of course led them to include the native people in the local governance of the Presidencies. The Women's Indian Association (WIA), which was organized by Annie Besant, Margaret Cousins, Dorothy Jinarajadasa and some other women in December 1917, prepared a memorandum demanding voting rights for women as equal to men in the society, duly signed by 23 women from different Provinces of India and submitted it before the committee.<sup>52</sup> Kamalabhai Chattopadya, Rukmani Arundale, Muthulakshmi Reddy, and Rukmani Lakshmipathi from Madras Province were the distinguished participants of franchise right of the women movement. Women leaders of WIA requested the Viceroy and Secretary of State to plead this case personally and argued that absence of women in the legislative council that has to be formed will be deplorable and their presence will be helpful as they ensure children grow up.<sup>53</sup> The British crown sent the Southborough Franchise Committee to India in 1918 to assess the suitability of the Indian women for giving grant to franchise, but the committee didn't recommend the government for women's franchise as it felt that Indian women were not yet ready for it. Sarojini Naidu and Annie Besant presented the situation that educated Indian women were well-equipped for holding office in the council before the Parliamentary Committee in England and, on hearing this, the Joint Parliamentary Committee agreed to cancel the gender disqualification of women. By the Indian Councils Act, 1919, the British Government provided the voting right for women and right to stand in election for taking part in the Legislative councils in the presidencies in 1920, if they had been a wifehood, property and education.<sup>54</sup> For the first time such voting right was given to women of Madras Presidency in 1921 election and in the subsequent election held in July 1926, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya from Mangalore and Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy from Madras stood for the Madras Legislative Council election.<sup>55</sup> Later, the Government of India Act of 1935 increased the number of enfranchised women and removed the previous qualifications for voting right but this time the age of 21 years was prescribed as a basic standard for a women's voting

right.<sup>56</sup>

### THE MADRAS LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Madras Presidency seemed to be an administrative provinces of the United Company of Merchants of England Trading to East Indies under the British Parliament during 1708-1857 and then it became a part of British India under the direct control of British Crown during 1858-1947.<sup>57</sup> To legislate the working constitution of the United Company of Merchants, the British Crown enacted the Regulating Act, 1773, which termed the Governor of Bengal as the Governor-General of Bengal and made him supreme to the three Presidencies viz., Madras Presidency, Bengal Presidency and Bombay Presidency. The legislative powers of Presidencies was clearly talked about in that act, but the Charter Act of 1833, which concentrated all the legislative power in the Governor-General of Bengal, deprived the power of independent legislation of presidencies. The legislative power of Presidencies was reinstated by the Indian Councils Act, 1861, which allowed the local Government to constitute a provincial Legislative council with 4-8 members of the Governor's executive council, non-officials nominated by the Governor and an Advocate General for passing a resolution that could not interfere with the central legislation. The Legislature of Madras Presidency was given the power to enact laws for peace and good Government.<sup>58</sup> However, all bills passed by the Provincial Legislature required the assent of the Governor-General before they were enforced and, even after that, they could be disallowed by the British Crown to whom they had to be referred.<sup>59</sup> Till 1920 only Europeans were the members of the Madras Legislative Council, whereupon the number of members were increased and many native people were included in the council. Between 1837 and 1937, 93 laws relating to the public administrations were passed in the Madras legislative council, of which also only a few acts are meant for women care measures.

### EDUCATION OF GIRLS

Census 1921 states that there were 5,378,656 boys and 5,555,573 girls at the 1-10 age group, of which 5270,252 boys and 5,520,068 girls were illiterates, and that there were 2,605,202 boys and 2438,224 girls were at the 11-15 age group, of which 2,268,437 boys and 2,357,847 girls were illiterates in Madras Presidency.<sup>60</sup> The Tamil Nadu Elementary Education Act, 1920, which stressed compulsory education for all boys and girls at the school going age by its Chapter V, was passed on 12th October 1920 to increase the literacy rate in Madras Presidency;<sup>61</sup> many schools were started to give education to boys and girls and the parents were even compelled to send their children to schools. This act has ensured some success in increasing the literacy rate in Madras Presidency during the period of Justice Government.<sup>62</sup> The Muslims didn't accept this move as they believed that the sending of Muslim girls to schools would be in the wrong side of their religious beliefs and sentiments.<sup>63</sup> However, the Justice Government constantly urged parents to send their daughters to schools for their wellbeings.<sup>64</sup>

### BORSTAL SCHOOL

Because of illiteracy and poor economic standards of families, many children at school-going stage became thieves and offenders who were charged for criminal activities on the public and their properties. In order to educate such adolescent criminals including boys and girls, the Tamil Nadu Borstal School Act, 1926, (V of 1926) was passed on 22nd February 1926, under which adolescent criminals were cared well and educated in the Borstar Schools until they attained the age of 18 for girls and 21 for boys or developed good habits to live in the society.<sup>65</sup> Such schools marshaled the adolescent offenders to a moral life.

### IMMORAL TRAFFIC OF GIRLS

The Justice Government felt that brothel and prostitution of girls were mainly due to abandonment by the family or husband or parents. The Tamil Nadu Children Act, 1920, was passed for care, protection, maintenance, welfare, training, education and rehabilitation of neglected girls and boys in Madras Presidency.<sup>66</sup> By this act, welfare Boards, special schools and children homes were created at suitable areas to accommodate the neglected children for protecting their livelihoods.<sup>67</sup> This act was especially meant for neglected or delineated girls and boys.



### ABOLITION OF DEVADASI SYSTEM

Historians are of the opinion that probably the custom of dedicating girls to temples became quite common in the 6th century A.D.<sup>68</sup> There were 10-400 devadasis in each temple during the Chola Period depending on the wealth of the temple.<sup>69</sup> Devadasis participated in the regular puja by singing songs and making flower garlands for the adoration of the God and at the same time they served as recognized sex workers in the territory of the temple. Even though the sections 372 and 373 of IPC (1860) were tried to prevent prostitution, they didn't have direct influence on the devadasi system being practiced in temples. The Justice Party had passed the a resolution called Devadasi Bill, 1927, for the purpose of abolition of devadasi system in all temples of Madras Presidency and to ban the services rendered to devadasis in the form of land and money.<sup>70</sup> The Bill could not get the assent of the Governor-General because of the reason that mere abolition of devadasi system alone could not change the life of dasi women, but it would later open a way for enacting the Tamil Nadu Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act, 1947, which legally banned devadasi system in Madras Presidency in 1947.<sup>71</sup>

### CONCLUSION

This study clearly shows that early social reformers with creative minds had felt the needs of women and urged the British Government, Central Legislative Council and State Legislative Councils to enact suitable legislations for the care and well-being of women in the 19th and 20th centuries. Each of such legislations had brought a change in the livelihood of women for modern life and put aside an earlier custom. Between 1920 and 1937, the central Legislative Council had enacted laws for Hindu Women's Right and prevention of child marriage while the Madras Legislative Council had passed acts to promote girls education, to prevent devadasi system, to rise the marriage age of girls and to protect the neglected girls and boys. This period would therefore be a milestone for all legislations for women-care after getting legislative autonomy.

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