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**Offences Relating to Women
and Children**

by

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STATUS OF WOMEN

In India, women constitute nearly fifty percent of the population. About 48.60% of the rural population is that of women and they are the vital labour force of the country. However, they remain amongst the most oppressed ones and are often denied the basic human rights.

Pre-Independence:

According to studies, women enjoyed equal status and rights during the early Vedic period. However, later (approximately 500 B.C.), the status of women began to decline with the Smritis and with the Islamic invasion and later Christianity curtailing women's freedom and rights. By and large, the women in India faced confinement and restrictions. The practice of child marriages is believed to have started from around sixth century. Women played an important role in India's independence struggle.

Constitution of India:

The Constitution of India guarantees to all Indian women equality (Article 14), no discrimination by the State (Article 15(1)), equality of opportunity (Article 16) and equal pay for equal work (Article 39(d)). In addition, it allows special provisions to be made by the State in favour of women and children (Article 15(3)), renounces practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e)), and also allows for provisions to be

