



Sabarimala verdict – Progressive OR a threat to traditions?

Description

Theme :-

- Women aged between 10 to 50 are banned from entering Sabarimala temple till recently.
- In September 2018, Supreme Court gave verdict in favor of the petitions to stop this discrimination and allowed women of all ages to enter into the Sabarimala temple. This judgement is praised by many and is seen as a progressive step towards gender equality.
- Ban on women of particular age group is still there because several people are not agreeing to Supreme Court judgement are protesting outside the temple. They opine that Supreme Court judgement on Sabarimala issue is a threat to traditions.

In Favor of Supreme Court verdict on Sabarimala issue :-

- The rule of Sabarimala is discriminating women from right of worship and right to equality. 'Article 14' of Indian constitution guarantees right to equality.
- Some other temples also ban women, and some temples ban men. If it is the same situation with Sabarimala, people wouldn't have bothered about it. But treating menstruation as impure and banning women of reproductive age is regressive and need to address. Menstruation is just a biological process. Not allowing menstruating women in temples sends a wrong message to people and future generations.
- This situation can be compared with the ban on Dalits from entering into temples until a few years ago. After so much struggle by Dr. B.R.Ambedkar and others, situations have improved. There were many attempts to stop this from happening. For example, in 1932, enquiry committee of Travencore government noted that – Rights of savarnas to keep avarnas out of their temples should be considered.
- Sabarimala temple is taking funds from government and hence state government has the right to make changes in law for the temple.
- Who wrote traditions? It's the people themselves and not god. There is a need to update traditions if they are regressive.
- There is no scripture to support the argument that women of these particular ages are not



allowed to Sabarimala temple. How can some people say that this is a rule as if they own the God?

- Why everything is seen in a sexual nature? Brahmacharya doesn't mean women cannot worship god. Brahmacharya means observing celibacy. It doesn't mean that there shouldn't be female devotees of reproductive age. Narrow-minded people do not understand the difference between devotion and sexual attraction.
- Former top bureaucrat T K A Nair mentioned that before 1940s, women used to enter sabarimala. He told that His mother visited the temple when he was months old. If it is true, this rule was a recently added one and not an age-old one.
- Perhaps the rule was put as there will be hygiene issues for menstruating women. But now, with the advanced facilities available, there are no such issues.

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Against to Supreme Court verdict on Sabarimala issue :-

- Just like everyone else, God too has rights. Not allowing women of particular ages is essential and integral nexus to the celibate nature of the very Deity of the Temple. Other temples of Ayyappa swamy allows everyone. But the deity in Sabarimala temple follows the concept of eternal celibacy. And hence, he wants to maintain distance from the opposite gender.
- Some temples ban men too. That doesn't mean they are discriminatory in nature. Every temple has its own story and that needs to be respected.
- It is very important to consider the emotions of the people involved when the traditions need to be updated. Long time devotees and temple trust are opposing the Supreme court verdict.
- India is a land of diversity. We should embrace and respect all cultures and traditions of all communities. If this particular section of people have their own customs, we need to respect that.
- There is a story in a book that a Goddess asked Ayyappa to marry her. But he told her that he is a Brahmachari and would marry her when no first-time visitor (kanni Ayyappa) comes to the Sabarimala Temple. But he allowed her to reside nearby, now known as the Malikapurathamma Temple. It is believed that to respect the interests of the waiting bride, women of marriageable age do not enter the shrine.
- We cannot really compare Dalits' temple ban issue with Sabarimala issue because, Dalits were not allowed to many temples. But here women are banned from entering into only one temple and that too because God here is a celibate.
- In 1991, Kerala High Court received similar petitions, and it gave judgement that restriction was in accordance with a usage from time immemorial and not discriminatory under the Constitution. There is a need to consider this judgement as they would have studied the issue in-depth.

Conclusion :-



It is our responsibility to work towards the betterment of the cultural norms and traditions in order to promote equality and democratic values. Traditions are written by people and not god. It is not okay to follow traditions blindly. Instead we should question and discuss the cultural norms and work towards the improvement in them.

If the Supreme court verdict is respected and followed, it will be first step towards eliminating gender discriminatory practices in all religions of India.

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Your Turn...

What is your opinion on Sabarimala verdict? Express your thoughts in the comment section below. Subscribe to our blog to get notifications whenever a new post is published.

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