

## **CASE STUDY**

You are a senior IAS officer. You have recently been posted in a district, where a temple has traditionally been closed to women of menstruating age. In the context of a PIL, India's Supreme Court ended this ban on the temple entry of women of menstruating age. This sparked massive protests in your area against the verdict. The ruling government of the state is in favour of implementing the Supreme Court's verdict but the major opposition party supported protestors on religious grounds in the backdrop of upcoming elections. Many women tried to enter the temple after the court ruling, but were stopped by angry mobs of protesters.

To break this barrier created by the protestors and assert women's right, two women of menstruating age entered the temple with some psychological tricking. The women's entry into the temple aggravated the protest. Moreover, these women were beaten up and abandoned by their family (including female family members), for tarnishing the purity of the holy shrine. In this situation-

- a) What ethical issues can you identify in the case?
- b) What are the contradictory values and rights involved in the case?
- c) If asked by the ruling government to strategize the resolution for this, what would be your strategy being an officer-in-charge of the issue? Justify.

### **Approach:**

- **Introduce the case study**
- **Identify stakeholders**
- **Identify ethical issues involved in the case**
- **Identify contradictory values and rights**
- **Suggest a strategy to resolve this issue**

**Answer:** The given case seems to be a sensitive battle involving religion, gender, politics and history.

### **Stakeholders**

- The two women, their family and other females.
- The protestors and supporters of the verdict.
- The government.

### **Ethical Issues**

- **Gender inequality:** The protestors are infringing the right to equality of women under article 14.
- **Contempt of Court:** The protestors creating hurdles for implementation of Court's verdict are liable to contempt of Court.
- **Vote bank politics:** The support to the protest just for votes at the cost of women's right by a political party is unethical.

- **Undesired attitude:** The attitude, resulting in treatment with women as impure and untouchable during menstruation and violence against them due to patriarchy is undesired in the modern society.

### **Contradictory values and rights**

- **Rationality Vs. freedom:** Some consider the verdict as rational decision but others consider it as attack on their religious freedom.
- **Law Vs. Religion:** The protestors are undermining the rule of law for the traditional religious believes.
- **Right to practice religion Vs. Right to equality:** There is a fight between right to equality of women and right to practice religion of protestors.

### **Strategy to resolve the issue**

- **Protection:** The two women and their family should be protection to avoid any violent attack on them.
- **Operant conditioning:** The women have been punished for showing bravery whereas they should be rewarded, in order to instill a sense of proud in their family and motivate others.
- **Participative decision:** The ruling party should initiate Inter-party and inter-stakeholder discussions, for a participative political solution to the problem.
- **Persuasion:** Credible leaders like, temple priests can be persuaded to implement the verdict and change the undesired attitudes, as public is more likely to follow them.
- **Beginning from the home:** NGO's help can be taken to persuade local active women and gradually through them to their family members and so on.
- **Legal route:** The state should encourage the representatives of the protestors to take legal route of appeal instead of violence. Till then, women entry can be restricted outside the main premises.
- **Value Education:** Such attitudinal problems need long term solutions like value education for inculcating values like, tolerance, rationality, equality, Empathy and compassion.