

# Introduction: Law as a Tool That Changed How We Live

If you're preparing for your LLB or LLM exams, you've probably come across the statement: **“Law has played a vital role in changing society.”**

But what does that really mean?

It means law isn't just about punishments or procedures. It's not just about what's written in textbooks. Law is about real people. It's about how we live, what we believe, and how we treat each other.

Think about it—at one time, women were forced to commit *Sati*. Dalits were treated as untouchables. Child marriage was normal. LGBTQ+ people had to hide who they were. These were not just social habits—they were **harsh realities**. And what helped to change them?

## Law.

Law gave people the right to say: “This is wrong.”

It gave courts the power to stop injustice.

It gave victims the courage to speak up.

In simple words, **law has played a vital role in changing society** by turning hope into action. It made people more equal. It brought fairness where there was silence. It helped society move forward.

As law students, this is something you must feel—not just memorize. Yes, your syllabus includes constitutional law, family law, jurisprudence—but each of these subjects is full of stories where law met society and something big changed.

So, in this post, we're going to walk through **seven powerful ways law changed Indian society**—from abolishing *Sati* to recognizing LGBTQ+ rights. We'll also look at examples from other countries, and yes—we'll talk about when law failed too. Because law is powerful, but it's not perfect.

If you're getting ready for your LLB or LLM exams, this post will give you more than just points to write. It will give you a deeper understanding of **why law matters**.

Because at the end of the day, **laws are made on paper—but they're meant to change lives**.

Let's now explore: **What is the real role of law in shaping society?**

## II. The Social Role of Law: Beyond Courts and Codes

Law is more than just a system for solving disputes. It is deeply connected to how society grows, adapts, and reforms itself over time.

For law students, it's important to understand that law does not work in isolation. It is shaped by the needs of society. At the same time, it shapes how society behaves. This relationship is continuous and powerful.

The idea that *law has played a vital role in changing society* becomes clear when we look at history. Every time a harmful social practice was challenged, law became the tool that gave structure to change. It turned people's voices into action. It protected those who had no power before.

But law doesn't only stop wrongs. It also creates new paths. For example, when the Constitution of India guaranteed the right to education, it opened up opportunities for millions of children. When the law recognized sexual harassment at the workplace, it gave women the courage to speak up. These are not just legal rules. They are social messages. They tell people what is right and what is unacceptable.

Some thinkers have described law as a "mirror of society." That's partly true. It reflects the values and fears of the time. But law is also a tool for transformation. It can question traditions. It can break down barriers. It can set a new direction for the future.

Law has played a vital role in changing society by giving people a peaceful, organized way to seek justice. Instead of protests turning violent, or social tensions exploding, the legal system gives us courts, petitions, and rights. It gives people hope that change can come through proper channels.

However, for law to be effective, it must be backed by awareness, access, and willingness to implement it properly. A strong law is not enough if people do not know their rights or cannot afford to go to court.

That is why your role as a future lawyer matters so much. You are not just learning rules. You are preparing to become part of a system that can bring fairness to the ground level.

### **III. 7 Landmark Moments Where Law Changed Indian Society**

To truly understand how *law has played a vital role in changing society*, we must look at real examples. India has gone through major transformations in the last two centuries. In each of these, law played a central role. Whether it was ending old harmful customs or introducing new rights, the law gave society a clear path to move forward.

Let's now explore seven landmark moments where legal reforms brought social change. These examples are important not just for your LLB or LLM exams, but also to understand the living power of law.

#### **1. Abolition of Sati (1829)**

Sati was a practice where a widow was forced to burn herself on her husband's funeral pyre. It was both cruel and inhuman. Social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy raised their voices against it. But the turning point came when Lord William Bentinck passed Regulation XVII in 1829, making Sati illegal. This legal ban was a huge moment. It showed that law could challenge dangerous traditions and protect human life.

## **2. Prohibition of Child Marriage**

Child marriage was common in Indian society for centuries. In 1929, the Child Marriage Restraint Act was passed. Later, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, gave it stronger teeth. These laws did not end the practice overnight, but they gave legal support to campaigns, awareness drives, and rescue operations. Today, child marriage is still a problem in some areas, but thanks to the law, it is no longer socially acceptable.

## **3. Abolition of Untouchability (Article 17 of the Constitution)**

India's caste system led to untouchability, where Dalits were treated as impure and denied basic human dignity. The Indian Constitution banned untouchability through Article 17. This was followed by the Civil Rights Act of 1955 and SC/ST Atrocities Act, 1989. These legal tools have helped many Dalits fight discrimination, demand justice, and claim their rights in society.

## **4. Dowry Prohibition Act (1961)**

Dowry deaths and bride burning became a national issue. The Dowry Prohibition Act made it illegal to give or take dowry. Later, Section 498A of the IPC was added to protect women from cruelty. These laws gave women and families the right to file cases, seek protection, and challenge a deeply rooted evil.

## **5. Right to Education (RTE Act, 2009)**

Education is the key to equality. The RTE Act made free and compulsory education a right for every child aged 6–14. This law helped reduce school dropouts, brought more girls into classrooms, and pushed for quality education. It gave poor families a voice and children a future.

## **6. Vishaka Guidelines and Workplace Safety for Women**

In 1997, the Supreme Court issued the Vishaka Guidelines to deal with sexual harassment at the workplace. Later, the 2013 Act made these protections stronger. For the first time, working women had legal backing to demand a safe and respectful work environment.

## **7. Decriminalization of Section 377 (2018)**

For many years, Section 377 of the IPC treated same-sex relationships as a crime. In 2018, the Supreme Court struck it down, calling it unconstitutional. This was a historic judgment that gave dignity and freedom to LGBTQ+ people. It was a bold step that showed law can lead the way in changing public opinion.

Each of these examples proves that law has played a vital role in changing society. Whether it is about saving lives, protecting rights, or building equality, law has been at the heart of social change in India.

In the next section, we will look beyond India. We will explore how laws in other countries have also shaped their societies in powerful ways. This will help us understand that the connection between law and social change is a global truth.

## **IV. Global Echo – When Law Changed the World**

We've seen how law has played a vital role in changing society in India. But this is not just an Indian story. Across the world, law has helped people fight injustice, win freedom, and bring in new values. These global examples show how powerful legal reforms can transform entire nations.

Let's look at a few key moments where law changed the course of history in other countries.

### **1. Civil Rights Movement in the United States**

In the 1950s and 60s, Black Americans faced racism, segregation, and violence. Schools, buses, restaurants, and even water taps were separated by race. But law played a key role in ending this injustice. The **Brown v. Board of Education (1954)** case declared racial segregation in schools illegal. Later, the **Civil Rights Act (1964)** and **Voting Rights Act (1965)** gave equal rights to Black citizens. These laws were not just rules. They were statements that America must change. Law gave people power to dream of equality.

### **2. Legalization of Same-Sex Marriage in the West**

For years, LGBTQ+ people in many countries were denied the right to marry. But slowly, the law changed that. **The Netherlands** became the first country to legalize same-sex marriage in 2001. Many others followed. In the **United States**, the Supreme Court's decision in **Obergefell v. Hodges (2015)** made same-sex marriage legal across the country. In **South Africa, Canada,** and **Germany**, similar laws were passed. These changes show how law can stand up for love, dignity, and equality.

### **3. Data Privacy and the GDPR in the European Union**

In today's digital world, protecting personal data is very important. The **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**, passed in 2016, gave people control over their online data. It forced companies to respect user privacy. This law changed how websites, apps, and tech giants like Google and Facebook operate. It also inspired other countries to make similar rules. Law responded to a new kind of need—digital safety.

### **4. Abortion Rights and Legal Backlash**

In **Roe v. Wade (1973)**, the U.S. Supreme Court gave women the right to abortion. It was seen as a step toward gender equality. But in 2022, the court reversed this right in **Dobbs v. Jackson**, taking the issue back to state governments. This shows that legal rights can move forward—but they can also be taken back. Law is powerful, but it needs protection.

## 5. Gender Equality in Scandinavian Countries

Countries like **Sweden, Norway, and Finland** used law to promote gender balance. They passed laws for **equal pay, paternity leave, and women in politics**. As a result, these societies became more equal and inclusive. This didn't happen overnight. It was law, backed by strong public support, that created lasting change.

These global stories prove that law has played a vital role in changing society across the world. The details may differ, but the pattern is clear. When people demand justice, and the law listens, real change becomes possible.

For LLB and LLM students, these examples offer rich material for essays, case studies, and comparative law questions. They also remind us that India is not alone in using law for social progress. There is a global conversation happening—and you, as a future lawyer, are part of it.

## V. When Law Fails or Fears to Act

Law is powerful. But law is not perfect.

We've seen how **law has played a vital role in changing society**. But what happens when the law is not used well? Or when it is ignored? Or when it stays silent?

That's when change slows down. Or never happens.

Let's look at some real situations where the law didn't work as it should have.

### 1. Caste Discrimination Still Happens

The Indian Constitution banned untouchability long ago. Article 17 makes it illegal. There are also laws like the SC/ST Act. But Dalits still face violence. In many villages, they are not allowed into temples. They are beaten for drinking water from public wells. Manual scavenging still exists. The law is strong. But society hasn't fully changed. That means the law is not reaching everyone.

### 2. Violence Against Women Continues

We have laws against domestic violence, dowry, and sexual harassment. But crimes against women are still very common. Many women are afraid to report. Some don't trust the police. Others are told to stay quiet. Even when a case is filed, justice takes too long. Sometimes, years. That makes victims feel helpless. The law exists. But without action, it fails.

### 3. Mob Lynching Is a Rising Threat

Mob lynching has become a big problem. People are attacked in the name of religion or caste. Videos go viral. Still, no central law has been passed to stop this. Some states made laws. But there is no strong national message. When the law is silent, hate spreads. People think they can get away with it.

### 4. No Strong Law for Online Harassment

The internet is full of abuse. Women, activists, and students get threats online. Personal photos are leaked. Fake news spreads fast. But there is no strong data privacy law in India. Victims don't know where to go. Cyber police stations are few. Laws are old. The internet is fast. But our laws are slow.

All these examples show one thing clearly. **Law has played a vital role in changing society**, but it doesn't always work. A law is only useful if it is applied. If people know about it. If police enforce it. And if courts give timely justice.

As law students, this is an important lesson. Making laws is not enough. We need awareness, access, and action.

## VI. The Road Ahead – Law in the Age of AI, Climate Crisis, and Digital Rights

The world is changing fast. New problems are rising every day.

Technology is growing. The climate is changing. People live more online than offline now.

So what does this mean for the law?

It means the law must grow too.

In the past, **law has played a vital role in changing society**. It ended child marriage. It brought education to all. It gave rights to women and LGBTQ+ people.

But now, we face new questions.

### 1. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Law

AI can write articles, grade exams, or even make decisions. But what happens when AI makes a mistake? Who is responsible?

There are no clear laws in India about AI. What if facial recognition wrongly targets someone? What if a robot replaces a human job?

The law needs to catch up. It must protect people from unfair technology. It must also support innovation—without harming human rights.

## **2. Climate Change Needs Legal Action**

Global warming is real. Floods, heatwaves, and crop failures are now common. Many poor communities suffer the most.

But are there strong laws to protect the environment? India has some acts, like the Environment Protection Act. But enforcement is weak.

We need new laws for clean air, green cities, and climate justice. We also need global cooperation. Law must lead the way, just like it did for education and gender rights.

## **3. Digital Rights and Online Freedom**

We live in the digital age. Every app collects data. Every website tracks us.

Do we have the right to online privacy? Can we control how our data is used?

The European Union has GDPR. India is still working on its Digital Personal Data Protection Act. But we need more awareness.

The internet should be safe and fair. The law must protect our digital lives, just like it protects us on the street.

### **Why It Matters for You**

You are the next generation of lawyers. These are the cases you will fight. These are the laws you will help shape.

Think beyond books and bare acts. Think about how law can solve real problems.

In the past, **law has played a vital role in changing society**. In the future, it must do even more.

The fight is not over. New challenges are coming. And we need smart, ethical, and brave lawyers to face them.

## **VII. Conclusion – Make Law a Living Force of Justice**

Law is more than a subject in your syllabus.

It is more than a set of rules or court judgments.

It is a living force. It shapes how people live, work, speak, and dream.

As we have seen, **law has played a vital role in changing society**. It helped stop harmful traditions. It gave people rights. It opened the doors to equality.

But law is not magic. It needs action. It needs awareness. It needs people who believe in justice.

That's where you come in.

You may be preparing for your LLB or LLM exams right now. But soon, you'll be the one writing petitions, arguing cases, or drafting new laws.

What kind of lawyer will you be?

Will you only follow what's written? Or will you ask if the law is fair, timely, and helpful?

The best lawyers don't just read the law. They question it. Improve it. Use it for good.

Today's world needs that kind of legal mind.

We face climate problems, online abuse, job insecurity, and rising inequality. These are real, growing issues. People are waiting for answers.

**Law can be that answer—but only if we use it with courage and care.**

So, as you prepare for your exams, also prepare for the bigger test—the one outside the classroom.

Be the kind of lawyer who sees the law as a tool. A tool to help people. A tool to build a better society.

Because at every turning point in history, it was not just leaders who brought change. It was the law, and the people who believed in it.

If you found this post helpful, share it with your classmates. Start a discussion. Add your own examples. Make this topic your own.

And always remember: **Law is not just about what was. It's about what can be.**

## **VIII. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **□ Q1. How has law played a vital role in changing society?**

Law has helped society evolve by banning harmful practices like Sati and child marriage. It has promoted equality, protected rights, and given people a peaceful way to demand justice. Without law, many social changes would not have happened.

## □ Q2. What are some legal examples of social change in India?

Important examples include:

- Abolition of Sati (1829)
- Child Marriage Restraint Act (1929)
- Abolition of Untouchability (Article 17)
- Dowry Prohibition Act (1961)
- Right to Education Act (2009)
- Vishaka Guidelines for workplace safety (1997)
- Decriminalization of Section 377 (2018)

Each of these shows how **law has played a vital role in changing Indian society.**

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## □ Q3. Why do some laws fail to bring real change?

Sometimes, laws are not enforced properly. Sometimes, people are unaware of their rights. Corruption, slow courts, and fear of speaking up also play a role. Law alone cannot fix society. It needs awareness, strong institutions, and public support.

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## □ Q4. How can law students help society change?

Law students can write about social issues, take up internships with legal aid centers, support PILs, and educate others about their rights. By becoming ethical and active professionals, students can use the law to bring real change.

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## □ Q5. What legal areas will shape the future of society?

Key future areas include:

- Climate justice laws
- Data privacy and cyber safety
- AI regulation and tech ethics
- Gender and LGBTQ+ rights
- Labour laws for gig workers

These are the next frontiers where **law can play a vital role in changing society.**