

CAUSES AND EFFECT OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN INDIAN SOCIETY

SWATI SINGH

“ A gender equal society would be one where the word ‘gender’ does not exist, where everyone can be themselves” - Gloria Steinem

Abstract: Society is based on many divisions such as ethnicity, community, colour, race, caste etc. and gender based division is the deepest division in every society. The concept of gender discrimination is not natural but manmade and men-determined. The main purpose of this research paper is to interrogate gender based discrimination in Indian context. It is a multifaceted issue which is deeply rooted in the social and cultural system of India. This study introduce Indian social and cultural system in gender discrimination context. Indian laws for equality have women's safety at heart, but these highly biased practices are still taking place at a frightening rate in India. The reason behind this discriminatory attitude is culturally and socially constructed and patriarchy is the prominent reason in Indian society. This paper argues that how patriarchy is a leading cause of this disparity? Women's exploitation is traditional and cultural phenomenon in Indian society. Gender discrimination is mainly concerned with women because it is only women who have been discriminated and suppressed on every step, phase and age of lives either physically or socially and this paper have made attempt to highlights various forms of gender discrimination in India.

Keywords: Gender, discrimination, men determined, inequality, social, physical, patriarchy.

Introduction: ‘Gender’ is a socio-cultural term which clarifies social roles and behaviors assigned to ‘males’ and ‘females’ in a given society. Gender is a complex concept of power relationship between men and women where men are considered superior to women. Therefore, gender may be understood as a man-made concept whereas Gender inequality means unequal manner of treating with individuals based on their gender. It stems from differences in socially constructed gender roles. Gender systems are often dichotomous and hierarchical. Gender inequality may reflect the inequalities that manifest in various forms of daily life. Gender inequality arises from distinctions, whether empirically grounded or socially constructed. Gender discrimination means sharing of resources and opportunities according to their Sex identities. Traditionally women has been ascribed a subordinate position to men. She has been suppressed, degraded, violated and discriminated everywhere both in our homes and in outside world. **Ann Oakley says, “Gender is just a social role that goes with someone's sex, and important aspect is their identity.”**

Patriarchy : In India, discriminatory behaviour towards men and women have existed for

generations and affect the lives of both genders. The constitution of India has given men and women equal rights but gender disparity still remains. Gender disparity violates human rights which are mostly seen in family land sharing among sisters and brothers. According to famous sociologist Sylvia Walby, **“Patriarchy is a system of social structure and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.”**

Women's exploitation is traditional and cultural phenomenon of Indian society. The system of patriarchy finds its authentication and approval in our religious beliefs, whether it is Hindu, Muslim or any other religion for example as per ancient Hindu law giver Manu: “Women are supposed to be in the custody of their father when they are children, they must be under the custody of their husband when married and under the custody of her son in old age or as widows. In no circumstances she should be allowed to assert herself independently”.

The above described position of women as per Manu is still present in the modern day social structure. except few things, women have no power to take independent decisions either inside their homes or in outside world. In Islamic culture the situation is same and there is also sanction for

discrimination and subordination is ascribed by religious texts and Islamic traditions. Similarly in other religious beliefs also women are being discriminated in various forms and different stages of lives.

The pity part of gender inequality in our society is women through continued socio-cultural conditioning have accepted their subordinate position too.

“The two great Civilizations India and China have killed close to 100 million women and girls because of patriarchal reasons.....Patriarchy locates women's struggles for social change in the context of patriarchal control of major social, economic, political and cultural institutions.” - Kamla Bhasin

Discrimination with female is due to lack of accessing economic resources like Land ownership from inheritance and others money resources.

Literacy: Women education of different age group is always concern in our country . Women receive little education, and suffer from unfair and biased laws.

Literacy rate of India in 2011 is 74.04%. The Male literacy rate is 82.14% and Female literacy rate is 65.46% according to Census 2011.

The Female literacy is highest in Kerala 91.98% and Mizoram 89.40%.

Lowest female literacy is in Rajasthan 52.66%.

Health:Healthwise women always considered to be the weaker in our country compare to a men,that might be their biological structure or mentality.In India Women face issues like lack of maternal health,malnutrition, diseases like AIDS, breast cancer, domestic violence and many more.

Nutrition is important for an individual's overall health, physically and psychologically. Health status is directly impacted by malnutrition. India has one of the highest rates of malnourished women among developing countries.

Maternal Health condition in india is not good .This situation is gets worst in Rural part of India which may be due to lack of medical facilities of doctors. Women in India always in a huge pressure that is why suicide has been found to be higher in women as compared to men in India.The most common reasons for women's

suicide is directly related to depression, anxiety, gender discrimination, domestic violence. The biggest disadvantage of women is considered their Biology.menstruation, pregnancy is the biggest physical burden of women but pregnancy and breastfeeding have most social consequences, At these times women are dependents on the male for their physical survival. Due to gender discrimination Haryana has less sex ratio in India .Haryana is very rich in terms of per capita income ,agriculture,infrastructure but they are on top of gender gap in India ,here Education is not a problem ,problem is in their old accustomed system in which a lady does not have enough rights to think her good or bad in society only male can do that. Now this state is suffering from the most critical problem of their era, this state does not have enough girls to marry with their male ,they are buying bride for their sons from other states and countries .This is the devastating picture of gender discrimination.

Politically:In our society power consists mainly in men's hand either socially or politically. So they try to oppose each and every thing that try to over rule them specially women.Politically women are not strong. Women turnout during India's 2014 parliamentary general elections was 65.63%, compared to 67.09% turnout for men.Women There are only 66 MP in 543 members of Lok Sabha which is 12.15% of total capacity of Lok Sabha.Women's Reservation Bill is still pending in country which suggests in 33 per cent reservation of all seats in the Lower house of Parliament of India . If the condition of women is this ,in top level of politics then think what would be situation at lower level of politics like gram panchayat.

Laws to Empower Women:There are various safeguards for women are given by Indian constitution for their safety and equality some of them are given below:

-In Article 14 of the constitution “the State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or equal protection of the laws within the territory of India”

-Article 15 of the constitution states that no person shall be discriminated on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

-Article 16 of the constitution lays down that the State cannot discriminate against anyone in the matters of employment. All citizens can apply for government jobs.

-Article 17 of the constitution abolishes the practice of untouchability. Practice of untouchability is an offence and anyone doing so is punishable by law.

-Section 66 of the Factories Act, 1948 imposes restriction on employment of women to work between 7.00 pm to 6.00 am. However, the Chief Inspector is empowered to grant relaxation, but in that case women are not permitted to work between 10.00 pm to 5.00 am.

-The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 that seeks to protect and provides a mechanism for women to report incidents of sexual harassment at their place of work.

-The Maternity Benefit Act 1961, creates rights to payments of maternity benefits for any woman employee who worked in any establishment for a

period of at least 80 days during the 12 months immediately preceding the date of her expected delivery.

Recently our honourable Prime Minister has launched scheme "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Yojana" because the current Census (2011) data has revealed a declining trend in Child Sex Ratio (CSR) between 0-6 years with an all time low of 919.

Conclusion: Only making laws is not enough in our country. We have to rethink upon these laws and their implementation. This is not only our Government duty, It is our moral duty to reduce the Gender inequality. Our Social masses has to change its mindset and attitude to empower women so that discrimination from society could be nullify. Women has to take a step forward to help herself for that they have to belief in self potential.

There is no occasion for women to consider themselves subordinate or inferior to men- Mahatma Gandhi

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Swati Singh

Department of Sociology
Research Scholar (BHU)