



## Gender Discrimination in India

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### Abstract

Gender is a common term whereas gender discrimination is meant only for women, because females are the only victims of gender discrimination. Females are nearly 50 percent of the total population but their representation in public life is very low. Recognizing women's right and believing their ability are essential for women's empowerment and development. This study deals with gender discrimination in India, its various forms and its causes. Importance of women in development, legislation for women and solution for gender discrimination are also discussed in this paper.

**Key Words :** Gender Discrimination, Gender Equality, Legislation for women, Education, Employment

### INTRODUCTION

Gender is a common term whereas gender discrimination is meant only for women, because females are the only victims of gender discrimination. Gender discrimination is not biologically determined but it is determined by socially and the discrimination can be changed by the proper and perpetuate efforts. Denial of equality, rights and opportunity and suppression in any form on the basis of gender is gender discrimination. Half of the world's population is females. They are doing two-third of work of the total work in the world but received only one-tenth of the world's total income. Nearly two-third of the women is illiterates and they have possessed only one percent of the total world's assets. In the world only one-fourth of the families are headed by female. India is a male dominant society and gender discrimination is customized habitually.

**GENDER INEQUALITY:-** Gender Inequality means disparity between men and women in different social, economic & political, cultural and legal aspects.

**Types of Gender Inequality:-** According to Nobel Laureate Prof. Amartya Sen (2001), there are seven types of gender inequalities at present in India. Here is a brief explanation of all the types of gender inequality.

**1) Mortality Inequality:-** In this, Inequality between women and men directly involves matters of life and death, and takes the brutal form of unusually high mortality rates for women and a consequent preponderance of men in the total population, as opposed to the preponderance of women found in societies with little or no gender bias in health care and nutrition.

**2) Nasality Inequality:-** In this kind of inequality a preference is given to boys over girls. It is ardent in many of the male dominated societies and these manifests in the form of parents wanting their newborn to be a boy rather than a



girl. With the availability of modern techniques to determine the gender of fetus, sex selective abortions has become common in India.

**3) Employment Inequality:** - In terms of employment as well as promotion at work women often face greater handicap than men. This is clearly exemplified as men getting priorities in getting better work opportunities and pay scale than their female counterparts.

**4) Ownership Inequality:** - In many societies ownership of property can also be very unequal. Since ages the traditional property rights have favored men in the most parts of India. The absence of claims to property can not only reduce the voice of women, but also make it harder for women to enter and flourish in commercial, economic and even some social activities.

**5) Special Opportunity Inequality:** - Even when there is little difference in basic facilities including schooling, the opportunities of higher education may be far fewer for young women than young men. Indeed, gender biasness in higher education and professional training can be observed in India.

**6) Basic-Facility Inequality:** - Even when demographic characteristics do not show much or any anti-female bias, there are other ways in which women can have less than a square deal.

**7) Household inequality:** - There are often enough, basic inequalities in gender relations within the family or the household, which can take many different forms. Even in cases in which there are no overt signs of anti-female bias in, say, survival or son-preference or education, or even in promotion to higher executive positions, the family arrangements can be

quite unequal in terms of sharing the burden of housework and child care.

#### OBJECTIVE AND DATA BASE:

➤ The main objective of the present paper is to examine the gender discrimination in India in demographic social, economic and political context. The data required for the present paper was collected from secondary sources.

#### HISTORY OF GENDER INEQUALITY

If we highlight ancient India, an Indian woman was in the position of high esteem and was pronounced by the word of maata (mother) or Devi (goddess) in the Vedas and Upanishads. Same as Manu Smriti, woman was considered as a precious being and in the early Vedic age, girls were looked after with care. Then practice of polygamy deteriorated the position of woman and in the medieval period, the practices of purdha system, dowry system, and sati system came into being. But with the passage of time, the status of woman was lowered.

After the development of science and technology, female feticides is being practiced by large number of people. This has also led to a drop in the female ratio. The Indian census 2011 state wise shows that Kerala represent the highest sex ratio with 1084 females per 1000 males while Haryana represents the lowest sex ratio with just 877 women per 1000 males. Then the dowry became popular and it was the starting period of female infanticide practices in few areas.

In India, a sex-selection phenomenon has been in place since the 1980s, with men born during this period now at marriageable age. Then the urbanization since the 1990s where a lot of families



and men have moved to cities to look for work. People are much wealthier but at the same time there's pressure to produce sons as an heir, so educated, wealthy families are now more likely to have sex selection. These entire factors are coming to play and creating this toxic mixture, which has turned violence against women into a bigger issue today.

The origin of the gender inequality has been always the male dominance. At least in India, a woman still needs the anchor of a husband and a family. Their dominating nature has led women to walk with their head down. It was all practiced from the beginning and is followed till date. In the case of a woman's reservation in parliament, the opposing parties believe that women are born to do household tasks and manage children and family. In many parts of India, women are viewed as an economic and financial liability despite contribution in several ways to our society, economy and by their families. The crime against women is increasing day by day. Domestic Violence, Rape, Sexual harassment, molestation, eve teasing, forced prostitution, sexual-exploitation, at work places are a common affair today. So, it's an alarming issue for our country. The major reasons for the gender inequality are identified as the need of a male heir for the family, huge dowry, continuous physical and financial support to girl child, poverty, domestic – violence, farming as major job for poor and the caste system.

### **DISCRIMINATIONS**

From web to death females are facing lots of discrimination against them. Some of them are

- Abortion of female gravid a with the help of scanning.
- Feticide (By giving liquid extract from cactus / opuntia, giving raw paddy to new born female baby, by pressing the face by pillow or by breaking the female baby's neck)
- Not giving enough and nutritious food
- Not allowing to go to school (Denial of education)
- Not giving needy health care while in ill health
- Early marriage
- Eve teasing, Rape and Sexual harassment
- Dowry
- Divorce, Destitution even for silly or without any reason.

### ***Causes of Gender Discrimination***

The causes of gender discrimination are

- Unemployment
- Races
- Low income
- Educational backwardness
- Caste
- Religious beliefs
- Culture
- On the name of family history
- Customs and beliefs
- Society
- Family situation
- Attitudes etc.

Like male or even above them female plays important role in the family and national development. But her contribution is not recognized by the male dominant society.

### **IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT**

Females are nearly 50 per cent of the total population but their representation



in public life is very low. Woman continues to bear the major load of the household work. Her primary role is often viewed by the society as housewife. In cardinal goals of democracy "of the people, by the people and for the people" cannot be optimically accomplished if the female population remains out of political empowerment. Subordination of women in society acts a structural constraint to their participation in political activities. This constraint operates more or less for all classes and communities of women. Prevalent culture which is very complicated and often decisions are taken behind the scene may be regarded as another constraint in this regard. Recognising women's rights and believing their ability are essential for women's empowerment and development. Females should realize their own capabilities and potentials which will strengthen their self-image and foster them with confidence to take action in life. Political empowerment does not imply just a right to role silently but to discuss, share and empower politics by knowing its pros and cons and thereby to influence policies and decision making.

Empowering women is the basic to the basics of human rights where she wants neither to beg for power nor search for power hierarchy to exercise power against others. On the contrary she demands to be accepted as human first of all. She as a person in command of herself and for that necessarily all the resources physical, social, economical, political, cultural and spiritual to be equally accessible to her, are prerequisites for considering the whole question of empowerment. Indian society is inherited with male chauvinism but now the

society has started to realize women's importance and has being accepted women's empowerment, women as an active agent for development, participation in and guiding their own development.

#### **LEGISLATION FOR WOMEN**

In India, several laws, legislations, policies and institutional reforms have been enacted to carry out the gender action plan for the development of women. Legislation is an important instrument for bringing about a change in the unequal economic and social status in India. In pre-independent India, few laws were passed in response to social demands and on the basis of humanitarian consideration. They are Bengal Sati Regulation Act of 1829 and similar Anti-Sati laws in Madras and Bombay, Hindu Widow Remarriage Act 1856, the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act in 1937, (The Muslim Personal Law) the Shariat Act 1937 and the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act 1939.

After Independence, there have been important changes in legislation and litigation which have facilitated the increased participation of women in political activities as well as in the socio-economic development activities and the increase appear to be more likely at the lower level than at the highest centres of decision making. Article 14 of Indian Constitution says that the state shall not deny to any person equality before or equal protection of the law, Article 15 says that no women can be discriminated against on the ground of sex, Article 15 (3) emphasis that the state shall make special provisions for women and children and Article 16 provides equality



of opportunity in matters relating to employment by the state.

In Article 39(a) emphasis that the citizens men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood, in Article 39(d) it says that the state should secure equal pay for equal work for both men and women and in Article 34 it provides that the state shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.

The 73rd and 74th Amendments of Indian Constitution in 1993 are the milestone in the history of India, which provides lot of powers for the local bodies. It paves the way for decentralization, empowers the poor people as well as women.

### **SOLUTION FOR GENDER DISCRIMINATION**

Various movements, programmes are being carried out by the Government, voluntary organizations and by lot of social activities for women's development and against the gender discrimination. To solve the gender discrimination problem the factor would be very useful. They factors are

**1. Education:** Education develops the skills, imparts knowledge, changes the attitude and improves the self-confidence. It provides employment opportunity and increases income. Hence educating women is the prime factor to combat gender discrimination and for the upliftment of women. Not only the female, the society must be educated to give equal right for female.

**2. Employment:** Employment gives the income and improves the economic

position of the women. Employed women are given importance by the family members. Employment gives the economic independence for the women.

**3. Economic Independence:** In India, mostly, women in the young age – depends her father, in the middle age – she depends on her husband and in the older age depends on her son. Woman always depends on somebody for her livelihoods hence, independent in economical aspects are imperative for women's development. Economic independence will free the women from the slavery position and boost the self-confidence. Economic independence of women also helps in the national economic development.

**4. Empowerment:** Empowering women with the help of laws, education and employment will make the society to accept the women as an equal gender like male. Female also has all the potential and empowering women will help to use her full capability and mitigate the economic dependency of women.

**5. Self-confidence:** Due to prolonged suppression, Indian women, an especially uneducated and unemployed woman hasn't had the self-confidence. Women need self-confidence to fight against all the atrocities against her and to live self-esteeming life. Hence, boosting the morale and self-confidence of the women, is the key to eliminate the inferior complex of her.

**6. Decision Making:** Even in the family as well as in the society the decision making power of women is denied. Mostly males make the important decision in the



family and in the society. This makes women as voice less and destroys herself confidence and she feels less important in the family as well as in the society. So, to end gender discrimination women must empower with decision making power.

### CONCLUSION

Gender inequality exists in all the countries, whether developed or developing. But it's intensity in is more in the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The issue of Gender discrimination differed all different times in the history of India. In the ancient Vedic period women enjoyed a respectable place in the society. Later deterioration in the states of women began with the imposition of severe restrictions on them after the emergence of Manusmriti. The British Government took certain goods steps to improve the condition of women in India. But certain evil customs are still being continued. The word community became aware of this issue and UNO, WHO and other International Institutions started creating awareness about this evil prace of Gender discrimination. Women face decimation right from the stage they are conceived in their mother's womb till there death. Now this situation is slowing changing due to efforts of social workers, government and non-government organizations. We have received the efforts of the Indian government. Though the situation is improving a lot remains to be done.

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