

GENDER BIASED PERSPECTIVE OF INDIAN SOCIETY-A MAJOR HURDLE IN ACHIEVING WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract:

Men and Women are the major components of society. Discrimination has always been there regarding the both genders since the formation of society. Violence, social separation, gender discrimination and abuse against women are the major challenges in the path of gender equality. Women in particular and their groups in general are facing various constraints in their way to achieve empowerment. Women worldwide face difficulties, in their control over and access to resources and participation within the social system. For social, cultural, economical, political and educational development, female empowerment is the basic key but the basic rights like jobs, medical facilities and decision making power are not provided to women when compared to men. In the history of human development, women has been as important as man. Progress of a country will be stagnated without the participation of women in social, economical and political activities. The economic status of women is in pathetic condition as she owns one-tenth of world's resources and earns one-third of total income, though contributing two-third of work hours and constitute half of humanity. The society is more biased in favour of male child in respect of education, nutrition and other opportunities. Several challenges that are plaguing the issue of gender bias and contribute a major hurdle in achieving women empowerment and by targeting these issues will directly benefit the empowerment of women include: gender bias in education, bias in health and safety concerns, professional inequality and household inequality. The advancement of handful women at a glance showcases the glimpse of women empowerment. On the contrary gazillion women of the society are still deprived of access to fundamental rights, which put down them in the pathetic situation and also undermine the real power of women. In my topic I will try to highlight the **gender biased Indian society as a major hurdle in achieving WOMEN EMPOWERMENT.**

A social behavior that gives preference to one gender over other in terms of power, ability and status defines gender bias. Both in the ancient as well as modern society the examples of bias or stereotype are embedded in the human psychology and can be reflected by pervasive unequal treatment of women. It leads to inaccurately describing characteristics of women and leads to negative discrimination against women in comparison to male. Women a magnificent creature of God and being the symbol of love, peace and tolerance has always been exploited and subject to misery. Discrimination against her starts much before she is born-in the form of feticide and felt all along till her last breath.

In Indian society girls and women do not enjoy same opportunities as boys and men for social, economical, educational, professional and political spheres. Women's empowerment and gender equality is essential for every society to ensure the sustainable development of the country. Discrimination affects many aspects in the lives of women from career development and progress to mental health disorders. While Indian laws grants equal rights to both sexes but the highly discriminatory practices are still taking place at an alarming rate.

It is the women who suffer the most in Indian society. In fact, the moment a woman gets pregnant she is under psychological pressure from her in-laws to deliver a baby boy rather than a girl. In many cases she will end up having an abortion (most of the time forcefully) if she finds out that the newborn will be a girl.

Feeling entitled to make your own decisions creates a sense of empowerment. Empowerment includes the action of raising the status of women through education, profession, raising awareness and training. Women's empowerment is all about equipping and allowing women to make life-determining decisions through the different problems in society.

It is widely accepted that India along with other developing countries have high gender inequality and lower women's empowerment than developed nations. Now let me try to emphasize how gender bias in Indian society happens to be a major hurdle in achieving WOMEN EMPOWERMENT.

Women's role and position in society changes drastically during her growth period. She needs attention, support, care and love of her near and dear ones, in her childhood of her parents and close relations, in her youth of her spouse, in her old age of her children. It is usually apathy of people concerned, at every stage of her life, which makes a woman's life miserable. As a custom women in society needs to stay back at home, to be engaged in cooking, cleaning, raising children, and to help in the family chores. Late 19th century opened some new alleys during the developed insurrection. Discussing the status of women in India from ancient to modern era will obviously reflect positive gains and achievements but still it is a long way to go and the ways are full of blockages. Now, the women are out of the secured territory of their homes and are now confronting the life with strength and talent. They have proved themselves but is yet to receive her duties. As far as the gender development & empowerment of women is concerned she is coming out of the Barbie doll image labeled to her by their ancestors. The position of women was not always so bad in India. In ancient India, during the Vedic period, women were placed on a high venerate. She attained a strategic position, respect and honor in the society for her role of good wife and personage mother . They were known for their mental alertness, intuition and spiritual qualities of love and service.

The invasions of Turks, Afghans and Mughals, the position of woman deteriorated , Right to education was taken away from them. They became the victims of illiteracy, ignorance, complete male-domination. Patriarchal system established unequal nature of family laws and traditions. Male members(sons) inherited the ancestral property alone and no share was given to sisters. Women suffered from social evils like Pardah system, Sati Pratha, dowry, polygamy and infanticide

During the second half of the nineteenth century, modern education drew the attention of some sensitive Indians and reformers like Swami Dayanand, Maharshi Karve, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Gandhi ji, etc. towards the oppressive and evil social customs, practices and traditions. They tried to put to an end those evil practices. Women India Association was formed in 1923 by Mrs. Ramabai Ranade, with branches all over the country.

The Indian Constitution of India has granted freedom, equality , right to education and occupation to women. Government of India issues guidelines, from time to time, to Central and State Government for formulating and implementing action programs for women. It has identified areas of health, family planning, nutrition, education, vocational courses for women, employment, legal provisions and social welfare for its future action plans.

WOMEN , The Homemakers ,The Social Gardner, The Real Caretaker gets always neglected from the society for her contended efforts. A women generates in each and every member of family a feeling of being wanted and loved. She provides to her husband and children a tension-free atmosphere to develop his personality in full and prosper in life.

Due to their tremendous efforts women have achieved the state of development in almost all fields but male dominance always prevented them to show their real talent .The fact is that the new heights could have been achieved by more and more women like their counterparts but she always finds herself alone and entangled by hurdles and obstacles framed by the stereotype approach of society. The biased approach of society can be felt transferred from generation to generation in families and society as a whole. Granting equality, education, jobs to women don't end the bias .Attitude and biased perspective gets reflected in each and every field irrespective how high the female member goes. Talent, knowledge and hard work is often overshadowed by the common belief that is firm nowadays also that females are the subordinators and males are the supreme .One has to come out of this belief and accept them as strong and competitive members. It is not females only that can bring change in their image and status but the acceptance by males can bring laurels . From the ages, she is neglected by people but this ideology needs to change, because this hinders her holistic development.

The year 2001 was declared by the Government of India as "Empowerment Year of Women" with a prime focus on looking women on equal platform to men. This has been further augmented with few sects of females becoming progressively self-conscious of their discernment in many arenas of personal and public life.

The crucial requisite of the age is Gender sensitization and gender teaching. The battle for gender equality has to be carried out at each & every level without any discrimination of caste, class, religion and race. It is to be accepted fact that the equality is not overnight changing phenomenon. At this moment, it is required to start up with a small step to be succeeded. That can be commenced by working with them (women) for them (women) at very grass root level.

The measures for improving the status of women should not destroy those valuable components of Indian culture, which sustains life, activity and happiness of all within a family. Without them a woman's life becomes just like a bouquet of paper flowers, which does not have any fragrance and after sometimes loses its charm.

We need a balanced social system gives enough space and opportunity to grow and adjust with each other. Each member need to share the liabilities and should willingly support and hold each other with respect and regard

without any biased approach. We should stand for positivity, openness, thought, perception in this discipline and share the responsibility for parenting, home-management and overall development of society.

The need of special attention in case of women arises not because they are intellectually inferior to men, but because they miss many opportunities, when some crucial years of their life are spent in fulfilling familial responsibilities. That time they serve humanity and the nation by taking care of the future generation, inevitably become part of one's nature and provide guidelines for their wholesome behavior pattern. Enhancement of women's self-esteem, stopping their progress from getting de-railed and getting their active participation in constructive work, the attention of social and political authorities is required to be focused on social mobilization and transformation of outdated social values. Creating gender sensitization is necessary. A woman herself should make efforts for her empowerment and well-being – be it physical, emotional or spiritual and become an enlightened woman.

Conclusion

It is of course a bunch & bulk of challenges for the feminists to convert the orthodox people to turn into a modernized as the disequilibrium and emancipation are the core of the Indian patriarchal system since the ages. It is ironic fact that the India is rich in its heritage and the diversified culture but along with it, it has an obnoxious cross too. Women was a Goddess at one time and Sati at other time. A quiet spectator, the worried women have struggled a lot in Indian culture. Framing & designing legislations and policies are not sufficient as it is Attitude and Biased Perspective of Society- A Major Hurdle in Achieving Women Empowerment. Many world leaders and scholars have argued that sustainable development is impossible without gender equality and women's empowerment. Sustainable development accepts environmental protection, social and economic development, including women's empowerment. It is widely believed that, the full participation of both men and women is critical for development. Only acknowledging men's participation will not be beneficial to sustainable development. In the context of women and development, empowerment must include more choices for women to make on their own. Without gender equality and empowerment, the country could not be just, and social change wouldn't occur. Therefore, scholars agree that women's empowerment plays a huge role in development and is one of the significant contributions of development. To develop and nurture women is nurturing a society in different manner. Still, it is like an unfulfilled dream of development of women.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interests.