

GENDER INEQUALITY IN INDIAN SOCIETY AND ROLE OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN REMOVING GENDER INEQUALITY

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Abstract: *If we look in to the history, since ages women have been experiencing discrimination, viewed as less than fully human, considered as inferior brains, suffered a lot due to a lack of legal rights and with very little independence. Gender is a function of power relationship between men and women where men are considered superior to women in Indian society. Traditionally women are considered as weaker section and kept in a subordinate position to men. The level of discrimination differs from society to society, community to community; it depends upon the development stage of a particular society or nation. Patriarchy system is the root cause of gender inequality.*

Education is a key tool in bringing socio – economic empowerment among women, which brings citizenry consciousness among women on their rights and duties. It promotes social, political, economical and cultural advancement of women. Educated women have proved to be no less than men in all fields.

Key Words: *Gender inequality, community, social problem, economic empowerment.*

1. INTRODUCTION - GENDER INEQUALITY:

For centuries women were discriminated and ill-treated by men. Women were considered as inferior to men and viewed as a sub-ordinate to men, ignored, neglected, confined to house hold activities and forced to be as a good mother.

De Beauvoir (1949) says on gender inequality - “One is not born, but becomes a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society: it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between, male and eunuch, which is described as feminine. Only the mediation of someone else can establish an individual as another”.

Gender inequality may be defined as discrimination against women based on their sex. Women are exploited, degraded, violated and discriminated both in our homes and in outside world. Discrimination against women is everywhere in the world and more so in Indian society. Gender discrimination is varying from one community to another.

2. GENDER INEQUALITY - A BRIEF DISCUSSION:

Gender inequality has been a social problem for centuries and it needs to be removed from the society. Sexism is the biggest threat to gender equality and marriage is the second major factor to gender inequality. After marriage majority of women tend to think that they are less power than men and their duty is to obey husband, in laws and look after family.

The whole world believed that women should not work at all around a century ago. Even though we have come closer to equality, there are still many people believe that certain careers and jobs are made just for women or just for men. Furthermore, when a man is being assertive, he is seen as a strong, confident individual. When a woman is being assertive, she's judged as controlling and self-centered. This is pathetic and ridiculous.

Why is gender inequality such a huge issue? Instead of working together to improve the world, why does it seem as if people are trying to make every situation a battle of the sexes? The problem is that people, especially men, cannot accept the fact that it is possible for men and women to be equal. At present, it seems that gender inequality is decreasing, but women are still treated less than men. Men cannot survive without women and women cannot survive without men; it is a well-known fact.

3. CAUSES OF GENDER INEQUALITY:

Religious beliefs and the socio (patriarchy system) – economic (poverty) conditions of the women are the main causes for gender inequality in Indian society. Patriarchy system is the root cause of gender inequalities in India. Sylvia Wallaby, famous sociologist says - patriarchy is “a system of social structure and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women”. The system of patriarchy finds its validity and sanction in major religions of India.

Manudharmshastra says “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". Over the ages these kinds of beliefs and practices were imposed on our Indian society. Even women were forced to accept and practice these beliefs.

4. FORMS OF GENDER INEQUALITY:

Working Hours - Women work longer than men

It is evident that women work more than men. Women are not only working in the offices, factories, institutions and industries but also they work at home. But, this is not considered as women are working more time than men. Previous studies proved that women are paid 34% less than men though they work approximately 50 minutes more time than men.

Inequality in grabbing employment opportunities and earnings

At present somehow women are paid equal wages in the organized and government sector. But, they are not paid equal wages as men in unorganized and private sector. Even now women are going through not only less pay but also they are not provided sufficient employment opportunities equal to men. This discrimination against women at employment opportunities and earnings clearly shows that women are not considered as equal to men.

Ownership Inequality

From the ancient times women are denied from having right to property. So, automatically men became the owner of the property. This made women to depend on men. The sexist practices in ownership of land and property in India is one of the main reasons for social and gender inequalities.

Survival Inequality

This is the worst form of gender inequality in Indian society. Female infanticide is the best example for survival inequality, Desire of parents and family members for baby boy led to increase of survival gender inequality.

Bias based on gender in the distribution of education opportunities and health care

These are the important areas where women experienced extreme discrimination due to gender. For several centuries women were denied of getting proper education and health care. Current researches proved that women have been experiencing discrimination in choosing their career and health care when compared to men.

Gender Inequality in Freedom Expression

Freedom of speech is the constitutional right of every Indian citizen. In our society women are considered low to men and viewed as they cannot make right decisions. Due to this simple, stupid and unacceptable reason, women were denied of enjoying the freedom of speech. When compared to men, women have less freedom to express their views and opinions not only on common issues but also on their personal life aspects.

5. SIGNIFICANCE OF WOMEN EDUCATION:

Education is a light which enlightens life of a person. Education not only removes ignorance but also makes a person conscious, skilled and productive. According to Napoleon, The Great - "Nation's progress is impossible without trained and educated mothers". It is said that if we educate a man, we educate a man only, but if we educate a woman, we educate the whole generation. This highlights the importance of female education, which is the first and foremost factor in removing gender inequalities. Education not only helps in the development of personality of the child but also decides his future.

6. ROLE OF EDUCATION IN REMOVING GENDER INEQUALITY:

Education plays very important role in the life of men as well as in the women's life. Education is the key weapon to remove gender inequalities in our society.

Following are the fruits of women education:

Socio - Economic empowerment: as long as women economically depending on men, the helpless condition of them cannot be changed. Women can achieve economic empowerment and independence only through proper education and employment.

Economic development and prosperity: Education leads to socio – economic empowerment of women and it promotes women to come forward and contribute towards the development and prosperity of the country.

Improved life chances / Standards: Education helps a woman to lead a good life. Through education she can read and learn about her rights. It leads towards improved life chances / standards.

Improved health conditions: Educated girls and women are aware of the importance of health and hygiene. Through health education, they are empowered to lead a healthy life-style. Educated mothers can take better care of both herself and her children.

Dignity and honor in the society: Education enhances dignity and honor of women. It removes all the stereotype situations and makes them become inspiration to the coming generations.

Social justice: Educated women are more informed of their rights for justice. It helps them to fight for their rights and free from social evil such as child marriages, dowry and female infanticide and to get equal employment opportunities in all fields.

Alleviates poverty: Women education is a pre-requisite to alleviate poverty. It leads to Socio – economic empowerment of women.

7. CONCLUSION:

At present women are given equal opportunities as men in all fields. Participation of women in politics and social activities is increasing day by day. Proper education sensitizes women on their civil, social, political and economic rights. It improves the overall wellbeing of women in our society.

To achieve gender equality, first of all we need to change our mind set and it will be necessary to provide for equal opportunity to all not only in access to education, but also in the conditions for success and also there is a need of bringing structural changes in the society. Gender inequality can be eliminated by conducting mass awareness programs to the parents, families, institutions and organizations. Women should be given high level of education and employment opportunities and also their participation in the politics and social activities must be increased.

Being citizens of a participative democratic country, the genders, women and men, has to found solutions to the problem of gender inequality and would take us all towards our cherished dream of a truly modern society in both thought and action.

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