

A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF GENDER INEQUALITY AMONG WOMEN IN THE HOUSEHOLD

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A domestic woman is a woman who performs household chores. In general, many times women are unpaid or paid less salary than men's work and are not valued as much as "men's work." Much of the work done by women is virtually invisible. It is most used to refer to unpaid labor performed by a mother or wife to the caretaker of the home and children.

Gender inequality means that traditionally women have been seen as a weaker section of the society. Discrimination against women is prevalent everywhere in the world. They suffer from exploitation, humiliation, and discrimination both at home and in society. In our house, we celebrate the birth of a son and if a daughter is born then we become silent. Even a rule has been made that no one should be treated justly. We love boys so much that in the desire to have boys we have been killing girls at the time of birth or even before birth since ancient times. If luckily they are not killed then we find many ways to discriminate against them throughout their lives.

Definition and concept of gender inequality

'Gender' is a socially constructed term, it shows the actions and behaviors of men & women in society through social relations, while the term "sex" is considered a biological characteristic which is a biological and physical attribute of men & women. Gender in its social historical and cultural aspects is the relation of power function between men and women where man is considered superior to woman. In this way 'gender' should be understood as a man-made principle, while 'sex' is a natural or biological characteristic of human beings.

Savitribai Phule, who was the first female teacher in India, educated women. Her major contribution was to educate women so that women who were

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lagging behind the mainstream of development could be brought into the mainstream of development at par with men. The contribution of Savitribai Phule is proving to be a boon for women today.

Various areas of gender inequality

A vital topic! Gender equality is a multifaceted issue in India, with various areas that require attention and effort. Here are some key areas where gender equality is being addressed:

1. Education

- **Girls' Education:** Initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao aim to increase girls' enrollment and retention rates.
- **Gender Sensitive Curricula:** Efforts to revise textbooks and teaching methods to promote gender equality.

2. Economic Empowerment

- **Women's Workforce Participation:** Initiatives to increase women's participation in the formal workforce.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Programs supporting women entrepreneurs, such as the Stand-Up India scheme.
- **Property Rights:** Laws ensuring women's rights to inherit and own property.

3. Health and Well-being

- **Maternal Health:** Initiatives to reduce maternal mortality rates and improve access to healthcare.
- **Reproductive Rights:** Efforts to increase access to family planning services and reproductive healthcare.
- **Mental Health:** Growing recognition of mental health issues affecting women and efforts to provide support.

4. Political Representation

- **Reservation Policies:** Laws reserving seats for women in local governance bodies (e.g., panchayats).
- **Women's Leadership:** Initiatives promoting women's leadership in politics and governance.

5. Safety and Security

- **Violence against Women:** Laws addressing domestic violence, sexual harassment, and other forms of violence.
- **Public Safety:** Initiatives improving public transportation, lighting, and infrastructure to enhance women's safety.

6. Social Norms and Attitudes

- **Challenging Patriarchal Norms:** Efforts to change societal attitudes and challenge patriarchal norms.
- **Promoting Positive Masculinity:** Initiatives encouraging men to support gender equality and challenge toxic masculinity.

7. Disability and Intersectionality

- **Addressing Intersectionality:** Recognition of the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination faced by women.
- **Disability Rights:** Laws and initiatives promoting accessibility and inclusion for women with disabilities.

8. Rural-Urban Divide

- **Addressing Rural-Urban Disparities:** Initiatives addressing the unique challenges faced by women in rural areas.
- **Improving access to Services:** Efforts to increase access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities for rural women.

9. Policy and Legislation

- **Strengthening Laws:** Efforts to strengthen laws and policies promoting gender equality.
- **Effective Implementation:** Initiatives ensuring effective implementation and enforcement of gender equality laws and policies.

These areas are interconnected and require a comprehensive approach to achieve gender equality in India.

Gender Inequality in India

According to Manu, the ancient Indian Hindu lawmaker, “A woman is supposed to be subordinate to her father in her childhood, to her husband after marriage, and to her son in her old age or after widowhood. Under no circumstances is she allowed to be independent on her own.”

Gender equality in India is a complex and multifaceted issue. While India has made significant progress in promoting gender equality, there is still much work to be done.

Progress:

- 1. Constitutional Guarantees:** The Indian Constitution guarantees equal rights for men and women, including equal pay for equal work, and prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex.
- 2. Legislative Reforms:** India has enacted several laws to promote gender equality, including the Dowry Prohibition Act, the Protection of Women

from Domestic Violence Act, and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act.

- 3. Education and Economic Empowerment:** India has made significant progress in increasing access to education and economic opportunities for women.
- 4. Women's Participation in Politics:** India has seen an increase in women's participation in politics, with several women holding key positions in government and parliament.

Challenges:

- 1. Discriminatory Social Norms:** Despite constitutional guarantees, discriminatory social norms and practices continue to prevail, particularly in rural areas.
- 2. Violence against Women:** India has a high incidence of violence against women, including domestic violence, rape, and acid attacks.
- 3. Limited access to Education and Healthcare:** Women, particularly in rural areas, continue to face significant barriers in accessing education and healthcare services.
- 4. Economic Inequality:** Women continue to face significant economic inequality, including limited access to credit, land, and other economic resources.

Initiatives:

- 1. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao:** A government initiative aimed at promoting girls' education and addressing the declining child sex ratio.
- 2. Stand Up India:** A government initiative aimed at promoting entrepreneurship among women and marginalized communities.
- 3. National Mission for Empowerment of Women:** A government initiative aimed at promoting women's empowerment and addressing issues related to violence against women.

Way forward:

- 1. Strengthening Laws and Policies:** Strengthening laws and policies to promote gender equality and address violence against women.
- 2. Changing Social Norms:** Promoting awareness and education to change discriminatory social norms and practices.
- 3. Increasing access to Education and Healthcare:** Increasing access to education and healthcare services, particularly for women in rural areas.
- 4. Promoting Economic Empowerment:** Promoting economic empowerment through initiatives such as entrepreneurship training and access to credit.

Factors of Gender Inequality

Despite socioeconomic and political development, the patriarchal mindset is prevalent in a complex form in the present Indian society. Due to this, women are still considered a responsibility of men. Women get fewer opportunities for development due to social and family stereotypes, due to which their personality is not able to develop fully. Social differences on issues like Sabri Mala Mandir & Triple Talaq reflect this mentality. Even today, at the practical level, women's right over family property is not in practice (which is equal to women's right over property as per the Supreme Court's order at the statutory level, hence women are discriminated against.

At the political level, there is no provision of any kind of reservation for women in higher statutory institutions except the Panchayati Raj system. The government has reserved 33% of seats for women in Panchayati Raj institutions. The Constitution (106th Amendment) Act 2023 reserves one-third of the seats for women in the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi. This will also apply to the seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.

There is underreporting of women's employment, that is, the work done by women on family farms and enterprises and unpaid work done within homes is not added to the GDP.

On parameters like educational factors, the position of women is weaker than that of men. Although the educational enrollment of girls has increased in the last two decades and gender equality is being achieved up to secondary education, there is still a lack of women in higher education and professional education. The enrolment of women in education is much lower than that of men.

Legal and Constitutional Measures of Gender Inequality

The Indian Constitution has taken many positive steps to remove gender inequality. The Preamble of the Constitution talks about providing equality of level and opportunity to all its citizens along with the goals of achieving socio-economic and political justice for everyone.

India has taken significant steps to address gender inequality through various legal and constitutional measures.

Constitutional Provisions

- 1. Article 14:** Equality before the law for all citizens, including women.
- 2. Article 15(1):** Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of sex.
- 3. Article 15(3):** Empower the state to make special provisions for women and children.
- 4. Article 16:** Equality of opportunity for all citizens, including women, in matters of public employment.

- 5. Article 21:** Right to life and personal liberty, which includes protection from domestic violence and sexual harassment.

Policies and Schemes

- 1. National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001):** Aims to promote women's empowerment and equality.
- 2. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme (2015):** Aims to address the declining child sex ratio and promote girls' education.
- 3. One-Stop Centres (OSCs):** Provide support and assistance to victims of violence.
- 4. Women's Helpline (181):** A 24/7 helpline for women in distress.

These legal and constitutional measures demonstrate India's commitment to addressing gender inequality and promoting women's empowerment.

Efforts to end inequality

The mindset of society is gradually changing, because of which issues related to women are being discussed seriously. Due to the activism of the government and the High Court & Supreme Court on issues like triple talaq and entry into Sabarimala Temple in Kerala, women are being given their rights. India is continuously making good efforts in the field of political participation. As a result, India is ranked 65th globally in terms of political empowerment (77.5%) and economic participation (39.5%) in the Global Gender Gap Index 2024 and is ranked 10th in terms of equality between female and male heads of state.

Efforts are being made to empower women through schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, One Staff Center Scheme and Women Helpline Scheme and Mahila Shakti Kendra, Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya. The government has prioritized ending violence against women and introduced special measures to combat the trafficking of women and girls, domestic violence, and sexual harassment. It has stepped up efforts to introduce and integrate gender in policy programming. In January 2015, the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative to save and empower the girl child. The term gender budgeting has come on the global platform in the last two to three decades, through which the benefits of government schemes are extended to women.

Conclusion

Achieving the Solution to gender Inequality is not limited to creating awareness, organizing awareness campaigns, pasting banners in the office, and publicity, but it is related to changing the beliefs of society, family, and religion. Government can make more efforts through policies to reduce gender inequalities in India. The government should provide free higher education to girls to empower them.

The government should also develop various policies for gender equality in India to prevent sex identification and sex-selective abortions. In India, NGOs can play

an important role in reducing gender inequality in India. 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' campaign by Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, can be achieved only if society's attitude toward women changes at the ground level.

Gender equality is related to social security, whether it is ensuring equal pay lists for employed women, guaranteeing jobs, or the legalities of maternity leave. To end gender inequality, there is a need to change the behavior of male mentality and it should be the responsibility of society to make women aware of their rights.

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