

## **“GENDER BIAS AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES FACED BY WOMEN IN INDIA”**

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**ABSTRACT :** Societies all over the world are developing at a very rapid pace with science and technology along with education helping most communities to progress. The progress of every nation depends on the productive population as well as its resources. The resources could be Men and Women also other natural resources available in that country like minerals, farmlands, grazing lands, forests, rivers etc. Humans play a vital part in a nation's progress and as we live in a Patriarchal society, men play a major role in our society. Although women constitute nearly half of the population their contribution to the growth and progress, although is very important but overlooked. Most of the work she does is projected as familial duties and does not get any recognition as it's not recorded as paid work in our society leading to her socio-economic and physical exploitation, lower status, and suppression.

The paper will highlight the status and condition of women, although some are appreciated for their work and revered while others ignored and exploited. Nevertheless, it should be highlighted that the work done by her either paid or unpaid is very vital to the development of any nation and her family as she contributes in ways which are not seen and recognized. The women in our society may be ignored or suppressed but they cannot be denied their dues and legal rights, recognized for their worth and appreciated as they play vital role in the progress of any society and development of the nation.

**KEYWORDS: Patriarchy, Violence, Suppression, Subordination, Toxic Masculinity...**

**INTRODUCTION :** India has always been a land of great scholars, academician, saints, warriors, kings, queens and women here have always been revered in our culture as great achievers, scholars, and treated and named like goddess Laxmi, Saraswati, Kaali, Durga and many others who have contributed and overcome challenges with their determination and power. They have been great leaders, scholars, economists and statesman like Maitri, Gargi, Rani Laxmibai, Ahilyabai Holkar and recent ones like Sarojini Naidu, Anandibai

Joshi, Indira Gandhi and many more as they were strong emotionally as well as mentally. Their position started to deteriorate around 500 B.C and it worsened during the Mughal era and continued from there. The Patriarchal system which pre-supposes the natural superiority of male over female, has been rooting for dependence and subordination of women in all spheres of their life. It seeks to keep women away from various power systems in an attempt to build a different public and private realm for them and men separately.

**OBJECTIVES :** To highlight the roles and duties of women in Patriarchal setup

To highlight the effects of Patriarchy and Toxic Masculinity

The role of Education and awareness in curbing the Gender-bias

**METHODOLOGY :** The secondary sources were used to collect data for the research paper through several books, articles, online resources and websites.

**Patriarchy and Subordination :** The term Patriarchy was widely used in the 1970's in the USA and England and it restricted women's mobility, freedom, as well as rights over property making them subordinate to men. Subordination meant women were less important than men. As per the Advanced Learners Dictionary, "Subordination means having less power or authority than somebody else in a group or an organization" (Hornby 2003:1296). Theories of Patriarchy by Walby, define two forms of Patriarchy; public and private. The Private Patriarchy has its base in the household domain as men are bread earners and therefore leading to women's suppression as well as oppression. Public Patriarchy is based in public domain where the woman is employed with the role of state as well as authority, thus we see Patriarchy in both the domain leading to women subordination. Many social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Pandita Ramabai, Dhondo Keshav Karve, Jyotirao Phule and others did contribute in improving the status of women and it was complimented with the British contribution

in enactment of acts like Sati Abolition and Prohibition Act along with Widow Remarriage Act-1856, helped in improving the status of women to a large extent.

The society was always dominated by men and to preserve the male dominance and supremacy, patriarchy created 'masculine' and 'feminine' characteristics which define our gender roles through early socialization. The agencies of socialization like family, school, religion, legal and economic systems as well as media are patriarchal in nature and therefore male dominated and always try to hold supremacy and authority over women leading to their subordination. "In this system women's labour power, women's reproduction, women's sexuality, women's mobility and property and other economic resources are under patriarchal control" (Walby, 1990). The constitution of India provides equality to them under Article 14 as well as equality of opportunity under Article 16. The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India provides reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayat Raj and Municipalities. The 84<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act of 1998, has provided 33 per cent seats in Parliament and State Legislatures. These acts have improved the representation of women in several areas but the figures and data reveal that even after 74 years of Independence, we see the female literacy rate and sex ratio, a grave matter of concern. There is still gender bias and women are powerless, marginalized and ignored in all areas of our society. The Women's Movement of 1970's has played a major role in creating awareness and enlightening a certain section of our society along with introduction of many Acts, Amendments and Bills, however their status has remained the same and even became worse in some parts of the country.

Michel Foucault in both his books, "Discipline and Punish" and "History of Sexuality" talks about power relations and how they are responsible for the regulation of everyday practices, their dispositions and course of actions. He argues that power is not an institution, neither a structure, nor it has a certain strength, but is the name one attributes to a complex strategic situation in a particular society. He emphasises that the strategic patriarchal system is planning, organising and implementing norms which are meticulously building hegemonic culture. Thus, we see a very consistent effort by power holders to keep the patriarchal system alive and active to keep their dominance, upper-hand and supremacy over women, so that women do not overtake or take control of things which were in their hands. He explains the concept of 'biopower' with 'biopolitics'

where people are guided to live at a biological level and follow norms for others to follow in society. This has made women weaker and also dependent on them.

**Patriarchy and Violence:** The violence that women face at home (domestic violence) involves a systematic use of power over resources, subordination, threats, isolation and fear of being divorced which has been described by Michael Johnson as 'Patriarchal Terrorism' (Johnson, 1995:284). He explains that this concept is motivated by the male desire to control the wives and show their ownership over them as part of patriarchy. The range of violence varies as per the situation as and when they face resistance by women. The women have been silent due to societal pressure and data from a global survey conducted by Thomson Reuters reveal that India is the fourth most dangerous country to live among the G-20 countries with stalking, harassment at work places, trafficking and forced prostitution along with abduction and increasing rape rate which is a matter of serious concern. The recent case of Nirbhaya is a living testimony to this and it is high time for our society to take cognisance and become alert, also the families need to practice equality and remove the gender barriers so that there are no more such cases in future and the concept of equality is ingrained in an individual from his childhood thus ending toxic masculinity.

Walby (1990) explained that men benefit socially and materially from patriarchy as they derive concrete economic gains from their subordination. The work done by women is gauged as productive or otherwise in terms of how it is helpful to the entire family. The work done by women is mostly unrecognized as she is engaged in the work which is mostly unpaid and is considered as household work or women's duty in our society. Women are dependent on their husband with property and productive resources being controlled by them and passed from father to son, emphasizing on material basis for patriarchy where although a few women may have legal rights to inherit property but due to certain social practices, emotional pressures and sometimes even violence and threats prevent them from taking control over it. They curtail her rights making them disadvantaged and highlights the material base of patriarchy where men not only control her physically, emotionally but also her labour.

**Women and Work :** Women account for two thirds of the world's 774 million illiterate adults, and their share has remained unchanged over the past two decades more than half of the 72 million children out of school are girls. Women world over work for 200 million hours per day collecting water and have a great knowledge

about water resources, its location, quality and storage methods. The impacts of recession, unemployment and slow economic growth on women and men differ due to gender norms and stereotypes that continue to spread gender-based discrimination in many areas, including access to productive assets and justice. (UN Women, *The Future Women Want*. A vision of sustainable development for all, 2012)

The urban educated women are modern and aware of their rights, privileges and enjoy the freedom and the rights bestowed to them. The women in urban areas get higher education, they excel in sports, arts and music, business, etc. and are motivated, encouraged in all the fields where men excel. The women compete with men and do as well and/or even better than them. This is done so that they get equal opportunities and a chance to prove their worth and excel in various fields and government is providing opportunities to women to remove gender barriers and promote equality as mentioned in the constitution of India.

The principle of gender equality in development cooperation has been stated in international agreements (United Nations, European Union, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, et al.). Many corporates and donors today integrate gender equality in their activities as a horizontal principle.

**Gender mainstreaming**: It is the concept of introducing gender equality to the mainstream of policy. Gender mainstreaming was defined as the global strategy for promoting gender equality in the Platform for Action adopted at the 4th UN World Conference on Women, which took place in Beijing, in 1995. It emphasized that it was necessary to ensure the presence of gender equality as a main objective in all areas of social and economic development.

In June 1997, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) defined gender mainstreaming as follows: "Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated". Gender mainstreaming includes activities for every sex, with correct action's,

undertaken when men or women are in particularly difficult situation. Interventions of this type may be targeted to women or to men only, but can be for both women and men, to provide them with equal participation in benefits resulting from development. These are essentially temporary measures to fight direct and indirect results of discrimination which may have taken place in the past.

Mainstreaming the gender equality perspective may lead to changes in objectives, strategies and activities, so that both women and men can influence the development processes, with equal participation and benefits. The goal of gender equality is then to transform unequal social and institutional structures into structures that would be equal and just for both men and women in society

**CONCLUSION**: The women of today are strong, intelligent and constitute 49% of our population, their labour and hard work in several areas today is commendable and noteworthy and it is rightly said that you can't ignore a woman as she is the force to reckon as despite facing several patriarchal barriers, suppressions, dominance and violence she has emerged stronger. They play a vital role in the socio-economic-politico-cultural process apart from being good homemakers. Their various achievements tell us that they certainly contribute at homes, society and community and also in national development. Their work and labour should be recognized and appreciated to make them partners in the process of growth and development for the betterment of society.

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