



GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN VARIOUS STAGES OF WOMEN'S LIFE IN INDIA.

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KEYWORDS :

Introduction

The Male dominated system of high technology, rather than offering relief, has contributed to the intensification of discrimination of against women. Parents can now detect the sex of a foetus within the first trimester, and, upon learning that the sex of the unborn child is female, many women choose or are forced to abort. Girl children are feed less and for shorter periods and are not given foods like butter or milk, which are reserved for boys. Boys are sent to schools, girls often stay home to look after young siblings and to help with household chores. Most Indian girls are married below the age of 18. Marriage is almost arranged by parents or brothers. The young bride must be obedient to her elders, loyal to her husband and his family, and never discuss her marital problems with outsiders. The model wife is taught she ready to sacrifice her life for the honour of her husband and his family name. A major impediment to the human rights of women in India is the fact that laws relating to the marriage, divorce, adoption, and inheritance are based primarily on religious law and tradition with different laws for Hindus, Muslims and Parsis. Any demand for equality based on sex is met with resistance on the grounds that such demands amount to interference with the right to freedom of religion.

CONCEPT OF GENDER.

The concept of gender cannot be fully explicated without reference to the concepts of 'gender role' and 'gender identity'. Gender roles may be described in two ways: established gender roles of a culture or gender roles of an individual.

In terms of culture, it may be described as a social norm or standard which summarizes the culturally constructed characteristics that define feminine and masculine may cover such diverse features as physical attributes, appearances, covert attributes including feelings, attitudes, motives, and beliefs. Gender roles typically include but are not confined to domestic, vocational, reproductive and erotic roles. Gender identity, broadly speaking indicates the degree which an individual regards herself or himself as feminine or masculine. It includes an individual sense of belonging to one sex or the other but is more complicated in that it may include characteristics that are both masculine and feminine by cultural definitions. (Kamalesh Mohan).

Gender Discrimination in feeding:

The girl child is viewed as an economic burden and social responsibility, she was unwanted and her arrival is not considered as a joy and discrimination begins immediately after birth, with respect to feeding practices, health and medical care. Various reports on the duration of Breast feeding indicate preference for longer feeding for boys; the interval between births is shorter after the birth of a girl than after the birth of a boy, indicating a shorter period of Breast feeding for the female child. (Helder and Bhattacharya 1969)

Gender discrimination or inequality from womb to tomb is a patent fact in the traditional cultures of the developing countries. In India too; discrimination on the basis of sex often starts at the earliest stages of the life. The Vedic era, however, was the golden era as far as equality of status and freedom are concerned. In gurukulas women studied with men and many women were well versed in the Vedas. Women were free to select their grooms. They were actively

associated with men in every social and religious ritual and ceremony. She could move freely out of her house and enjoyed freedom of movement by attending fairs and festivals, sabhas and assemblies of learned persons. A Woman had an absolute right over her. Thus, in this era women were considered an equal partner and enjoyed equal status and prestige in society. The couple was called Dampati which means that the husband and his wife are two the joint owners of the household (Neetha Tapan).

MALE, FEMALE DIFFERENCES IN EDUCATION.

Male literacy rate is higher than the female literacy rate. The inadequacy of education to reach out to girls and women can be analysed from four different aspects namely supply, access, and demand and participation. Factors like distance, of girl schools having toilet facilities, privacy to girls as they move to upper primary level are important for girls participation in education. Other social factors hindering female literacy are parental attitude; social norms related to women's education, employment potential as return of education, expensive involved in schooling, health and sanitation facilities in schools, etc.

FEMALE CHILD LABOUR:

Boys and girls participate in productive activities despite the expectation that they will be attending school and despite laws against child labour. For the female child, induction into adult activities, both household work and other production related works begins early. Day by day female child labour is increasing but male child labour is declining. Millions of female children do not get the opportunity of even acquiring a modicum of basic education.

According to Ishrat Ali Siddiqui, a study by two experts from the Indian institute of sciences, Bangalore shows that average girl child spent 29 percent of the total time gathering fuel-wood and 20 percent fetching water. In Uttar Pradesh where women spend between one and four hours daily on household work in addition to a back-breaking day in the field at least 30 percent of the household burden is shared by girls between the age group of six to eleven years. And in a country where women share 45.57 percent of the agriculture worker, more than 20 percent is shared by girl children (Ishrat Ali Siddiqui 1985:4)

PREFERENCE FOR MALE CHILDREN

In India most of the parents son preferred to a daughter. The desire for a son sometimes becomes an obsession even now while education, science and culture have taken big strides; the craving for a male child in people has not changed. This sort of propensity is strong even with middle class and the poor. Unmindful of their strained circumstances; these people go on producing a series of daughters for the ultimate glory of a son. Reason? They calculate that the son will receive dowries on his marriage, earn and support the family and look after his parents in their old age. The daughter is a 'Parayadhan' (others property) who leaves her parents for good, taking a good chunk of their resources in the shape of dowry. Besides, the Hindus believe that a man's soul will not attain peace if he does not have a son to perform the required obsequies and other rituals following it for him. This is an important sphere where a woman cannot slip into a man's shoes. (Pridhvi nath tikoo)

Constitutional Provisions for Gender Equality.

On 15 august 1947, India kept her tryst with destiny, and the constitution of the free nation was implemented from 26 January 1950 as a vehicle of social transformation to realise the goals of the freedom movement. The Preamble declares India as a sovereign, democratic republic, the words secular and socialist were added later in 1976. It recognises the principles of social, economic and political justice. The Fundamental Rights as guaranteed by the constitution tries to remove the inequalities which Indian Women had suffered. Article 14 promises equality before the law and equal protection by the laws. Article 15 prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. And also provides that the state make special provisions for women and children. Article 16 guarantees equality of opportunity in public employment. Article 23 prohibits traffic in human beings as well as force labour. Apart from the important provisions in the fundamental rights, some guidelines are given the Directive Principles of the state policy which are non justiciable. Article 39 directs the state to adopt a policy of equal for equal work for both men and women, and asks the state to ensure that the health and strength of men and women workers is not abused. It further seeks protection of children and youth from exploitation and from moral and material abandonment. Article 42 directs the state to make provisions for ensuring just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief. Article 44 wants the state to endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code. Article 51 inserted in 1976 by 42nd constitutional amendment imposes a fundamental duty on every citizen to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women. (Neera Desai & Usha Thakkar).

MAHATMA GANDHI VIEWS ON GENDER DISCRIMINATION

Mahatma Gandhi commented that "womanhood is not restricted to the kitchen" he opined and felt that "only when the women is liberated from the slavery of the kitchen, that her true spirit may be discovered". It does not mean that women should not cook. but only that household responsibilities be shared among men, women and children. He wanted women to outgrow the traditional responsibilities and participate in the affairs of nation. He criticized Indians passions for male progeny. He said that as long as we don't consider girls as natural as our boys our nation will be in a dark eclipse.

CONCLUSION:

Women have played a key role in the Indian society, national economic growth and development. Discrimination was started from birth to death, like feeding, schooling, dressing, recognition. Female education is the key tool to break the different types of gender discrimination. Education is a powerful weapon to eradicate the gender discrimination from top to bottom. Education of girls has a positive impact on socio-economic well being of women and their families and society. Indian government has introduced different schemes and programmes to women, especially equal status. The programmes and schemes were implemented successfully. But most of the people were not change their mind set on discrimination on women. The Non Governmental Organisations also playing vital role in the equal status to women. Most of the Non Governmental Organisations has organising special awareness programmes in rural and urban areas on Gender discrimination.

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