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## **Gender Discrimination and Women's Development in India**

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# **GENDER DISCRIMINATION AND WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT**

## **IN INDIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Gender is a common term where as gender discrimination is meant only for women, because females are the only victims of gender discrimination. Females are nearly 50 percent of the total population but their representation in public life is very low. Recognizing women's right and believing their ability are essential for women's empowerment and development. This study deals with gender discrimination in India, its various forms and its causes. Importance of women in development, legislation for women and solution for gender discrimination are also discussed in this paper.

**Key Words:** gender discrimination, women's development, legislation for women, education, employment, economic independence, empowerment, decision making and self confidence.

# **GENDER DISCRIMINATION AND WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT**

## **IN INDIA**

### **Introduction**

Gender is a common term where as gender discrimination is meant only for women, because females are the only victims of gender discrimination. Gender discrimination is not biologically determined but it is determined by socially and the discrimination can be changed by the proper and perpetuate efforts. Denial of equality, rights and opportunity and suppression in any form on the basis of gender is gender discrimination.

Half of the world's population is females. They are doing two-third of work of the total work in the world but received only one-tenth of the world's total income. Nearly two-third of the women is illiterates and they have possessed only one percent of the total world's assets. In the world only one-fourth of the families are headed by female. India is a male dominant society and gender discrimination is customised habitually.

### **Discriminations**

From web to death females are facing lots of discrimination against them. Some of them are

- ❖ Abortion of female gravida with the help of scanning.
- ❖ Feoticide (By giving liquid extract from cactus / opuntia, giving raw paddy to new born female baby, by pressing the face by pillow or by breaking the female baby's neck)
- ❖ Not giving enough and nutritious food
- ❖ Not allowing to go to school (Denial of education)
- ❖ Not giving needy health care while in ill health
- ❖ Early marriage
- ❖ Eve teasing, Rape and Sexual harassment
- ❖ Dowry
- ❖ Divorce, Destitution even for silly or without any reason.

### **Causes of Gender Discrimination**

The causes of gender discrimination are

- ❖ Educational backwardness
- ❖ Caste
- ❖ Religious beliefs
- ❖ Culture
- ❖ On the name of family history
- ❖ Customs and beliefs
- ❖ Races

- ❖ Low income
- ❖ Unemployment
- ❖ Society
- ❖ Family situation and
- ❖ Attitudes

Like male or even above them female plays important role in the family and national development. But her contribution is not recognized by the male dominant society.

### **Review of Literature**

Sonalde Desai (1994) observed that parents reluctance to educate daughters has its roots in the situation of women. Parents have several incentives for not educating their daughters. Foremost is the view that education of girls brings no returns to parents and that their future roles, being mainly reproductive and perhaps including agricultural labor, require no formal education.

Kalyani Menon Sen and A.K.Shivakumar (2001) found that girls in India are discriminated against in several ways – fewer months of breastfeeding less of nurturing and play, less care or medical treatment if they fall ill, less of “special” food, less of parental attention. As a result, girls are far more susceptible than boys to disease and infections, leading to poor

health and a shorter lifespan. It is this life-long discrimination in nurturing and care that is the real killer of girls – less visible and dramatic, but as unequivocally lethal as female foeticide and infanticide.

Berta Esteve – Volart (2004) described that gender discrimination against women in the market place reduces the available talent in an economy, which has negative economic consequences. Gender discrimination takes many forms. Many social practices seen as normal from a religious or cultural point of view (which may have deep historical roots) have women out of the economic mainstream. These social practices may have profound economic consequences because they do not allow society to take advantage of the talent inherent in women.

Anna-Maria Lind (2006) stated that India's population still leads traditional lives in rural areas. Religious laws and traditions still determine the lives of many people, particularly women. Even if women are formerly entitled to own land and resources social and religious factors make many women refrain from this right in order not to cause distortions within the family. The preference for having sons permeates all social classes in India, which sets the standard for girls throughout their entire lives.

GOI Planning Commission (2008) indicated that discrimination against women and girls impinges upon their right to health and manifests itself in the form of worsening health and nutrition indices. Thus, India continues to grapple with unacceptably high MMR, IMR, and increasing rates of anemia, malnutrition, HIV/AIDS among women.

Julie Mullin (2008) indicated that the developing world is full of poverty stricken families who see their daughters as an economic predicament. That attitude has resulted in the widespread neglect to baby girls in Africa, Asia and South America. In many communities, it's a regular practice to breastfeed girls for a shorter time than boys so that women can try to get pregnant again with a boy as soon as possible. As a result, girls miss out on life-giving nutrition during a crucial window of their development, which stunts their growth and weakens their resistance to disease.

### **Importance of Women in Development**

Females are nearly 50 per cent of the total population but their representation in public life is very low. Woman continues to bear the major load of the household work. Her primary role is often viewed by the society as housewife.

In cardinal goals of democracy “of the people, by the people and for the people” cannot be optimically accomplished if the female population remains out of political empowerment. Subordination of women in society acts a structural constraint to their participation in political activities. This constraint operates more or less for all classes and communities of women. Prevalent culture which is very complicated and often decisions are taken behind the scene may be regarded as another constraint in this regard.

Recognising women’s rights and believing their ability are essential for women’s empowerment and development. Females should realize their own capabilities and potentials which will strengthen their self image and foster them with confidence to take action in life. Political empowerment does not imply just a right to role silently but to discuss, share and empower politics by knowing its pros and cons and thereby to influence policies and decision making.

Empowering women is the basic to the basics of human rights where she wants neither to beg for power nor search for power hierarchy to exercise power against others. On the contrary she demands to be accepted as human first of all. She as a person in command of herself and for that necessarily all the resources physical, social, economical,



political, cultural and spiritual to be equally accessible to her, are pre-requisites for considering the whole question of empowerment.

Indian society is inherited with male chauvinism but now the society has started to realize women's importance and has being accepted women's empowerment, women as an active agent for development, participation in and guiding their own development.

### **Legislation for Women**

In India, several laws, legislations, policies and institutional reforms have been enacted to carry out the gender action plan for the development of women. Legislation is an important instrument for bringing about a change in the unequal economic and social status in India. In pre-independent India, few laws were passed in response to social demands and on the basis of humanitarian consideration. They are Bengal Sati Regulation Act of 1829 and similar Anti-Sati laws in Madras and Bombay, Hindu Widow Remarriage Act 1856, the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act in 1937, (The Muslim Personal Law) the Shariat Act 1937 and the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act 1939.

After Independence, there have been important changes in legislation and litigation which have facilitated the increased participation of women in political activities as well as in the socio-economic

development activities and the increase appear to be more likely at the lower level than at the highest centres of decision making.

Article 14 of Indian Constitution says that the state shall not deny to any person equality before or equal protection of the law, Article 15 says that no women can be discriminated against on the ground of sex, Article 15 (3) emphasis that the state shall make special provisions for women and children and Article 16 provides equality of opportunity in matters relating to employment by the state.

In Article 39(a) emphasis that the citizens men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood, in Article 39(d) it says that the state should secure equal pay for equal work for both men and women and in Article 34 it provides that the state shall make provision for securing just and humor humane for work and for maternity relief.

The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments of Indian Constitution in 1993 are the milestone in the history of India, which provides lot of powers for the local bodies. It paves the way for decentralisation, empowers the poor people as well as women.

According to these amendments not less than one third of the seats, meant for direct election of members at each tier of Panchayats are to be reserved for women and not less than one-third of the seats of chairperson at any level reserved for women.

## **Solution for Gender Discrimination**

Various movements, programmes are being carried out by the Government, voluntary organizations and by lot of social activities for women's development and against the gender discrimination.

To solve the gender discrimination problem the **E<sup>4</sup>SD** factor would be very useful. They **E<sup>4</sup>SD** factors are

### **1. Education**

Education develops the skills, imparts knowledge, changes the attitude and improves the self confidence. It provides employment opportunity and increases income. Hence educating women is the prime factor to combat gender discriminate and for the upliftment of women.

Not only the female, the society must be educated to give equal right for female.

### **2. Employment**

Employment gives the income and improves the economic position of the women. Employed women are given importance by the family members. Employment gives the economic independence for the women.

### **3. Economic Independence**

In India, mostly, women in the young age – depends her father, in the middle age- she depends on her husband and in the older age – depends on her son. Woman always depends on somebody for her livelihoods hence, independent in economical aspects are imperative for women's development.

Economic independence will free the women from the slavery position and boost the self confidence. Economic independence of women also helps in the national economic development.

### **4. Empowerment**

Empowering women with the help of laws, education and employment will make the society to accept the women as an equal gender like male. Female also has all the potential and empowering women will help to use her full capability and mitigate the economic dependency of women.

## **5. Self-confidence**

Due to prolonged suppression, Indian women, an especially uneducated and unemployed woman hasn't had the self-confidence. Women need self confidence to fight against all the atrocities against her and to live self esteemed life. Hence, boosting the morale and self confidence of the women, is the key to eliminate the inferior complex of her.

## **6. Decision Making**

Even in the family as well as in the society the decision making power of women is denied. Mostly males make the importance decision in the family and in the society. This makes women as voice less and destroys herself confidence and she feels less important in the family as well as in the society. So, to end gender discrimination women must empower with decision making power.

## **Conclusion**

A nation or society, without the participation of women cannot achieve development. If we eliminate gender discrimination, women will deliver all the potentials, skills, knowledge to develop the family, the nation and the whole world.

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