

“Gender Bias in the Society”

*Husain Trivedi
LJ School of Law,
Gujarat University*

Before we jump into today's issue of gender biases, feminism and patriarchy, let us quickly look back into history. If we really go back thousands of years ago then we will find out that gender biases are not an invention in some particular era of history but it exists in our global culture, and the main reason behind these biases is because of the gender role each individual used to play and is still playing.

Now let us understand it by history which interconnects the present and see how we can nullify conservatism.

There is no denial that men and women are different, by hormones, biologically and physically. Men are indeed physically stronger than women and that is the first and foremost reason why from history we have always witnessed a male dominated society. Human beings have lived in a world where physical strength was important and was the only form of recognition. But we don't live in that world anymore. We don't live in a culture where only physical strength is heading the economy forward. Today we live in a world where creativity, ideas, innovation is prime and which doesn't ask for hormones.

Apart from biasedness in opportunity the world has witnessed some brutal violence against women in history, from Sati Pratha in India to the witch hunting of European women while establishing the capitalist society is very unfortunate. What is more disturbing is that even after knowing that science has ruled over fond mythical terms, we still don't turn back and ask that why women were burnt alive just for some stupid reasons and that shows our normal approach towards the violence on women from history.

I think that the problem with gender is that it always comes with a prescribed list of things one is supposed to do. It forces us into a cage of rules rather than recognizing who we really are.

If you even see today then gender roles decide what is suitable for you and your career. For example women are always expected to do the housework, cooking, sewing etc. Now what is interesting here to notice is that even after women are taught to do these things from childhood as if it has something to do with their jeans, we don't really see women with such a profession in the higher level. If you observe then you'll find out that people holding titles of chefs and fashion designers are mostly men. That says how narrow the gates of opportunity are for women even today.

If we look at the data and stats then we will find out that gender biasness is not a made up term but it is a live being.

The first United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) Gender Social Norms Index analysed data from 75 countries, which are collectively home to more than 80 per cent of the global population, and found new clues to the invisible barriers women face in achieving equality – potentially forging a path forward to breaking through the so-called “glass ceiling”.

According to the data, almost half of those polled feel that men are superior political leaders, while more than 40 per cent believe they make better business executives and are more entitled to jobs when the economy is lagging. Moreover, 28 per cent think it is justified for a man to beat his wife.¹

In the United States, women perform an average of four hours of unpaid work per day compared to men’s two and a half hours. Back in 1965, when the government first started keeping track, American women did almost all of the unpaid work in the home. Although the gender gap in unpaid labour has narrowed, women still perform a disproportionate amount of unpaid work — and on top of their full-time jobs.²

To fight gender inequality women have started an initiative which is well renowned today as "Feminism". The birth of feminism was initially started for bringing equal rights to women and breaking through the shallow norms of patriarchy.

As much as feminism has been successful in its initiative to deal with the injustice of society against women, it has faced a lot of criticism as well for biasedness of its nature.

Men in general and most of the women also argue on the facts how men in society also face oppression and injustice. However, it is true that men are being oppressed in society but their argument of oppression should not be rebuttal for women’s struggle in society.

Many of them even come up with an argument about how poor men face tyranny in their daily lives. Though it is true that poor men have to suffer, what people need to understand is that the conversation is not about that. Class and gender are two different forms of oppression. Now even when you combine it you would see that a poor woman still suffers much more than a poor man. A rich woman is surely situated better than a poor man but she is still situated worse than a rich man.

While talking about feminism we need to understand how patriarchy affects us.

Being a man, patriarchy surely comes up with benefits for us but with that it takes great cost. And the cost is always proving our masculinity and how we are men enough for society.

We often don’t realize how patriarchy has entered our system thoroughly. From the very first day of our lives we’re told how important it is to be man enough in society. We are given a script which says, boys are strong and girls are weak. I would like to share my personal

¹ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1058731%20>

² <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/03/04/opinion/women-unpaid-labor.html%20>

experience here, from growing up I mostly lived with my mother and was away from my father for some reasons.

Growing up with my mother meant growing up soft, and being soft as a boy meant I will get bullied. My mother always taught me how it's not good to use hands but your heart.

I still remember when my father used to visit us for some days, he used to beat me for not beating the other guy with whom I indulged in a fight. But my mother was always there to cover that part and sometimes I blame her for that too.

Later when I grew up and finally had time to sit with my father, he obviously didn't have anything to say on how to win a fight with a guy but how being a man is a sacrifice and doing whatever you can to take care of your family. He explained to me how being a man means to suffer in secret. Now as I stand today crashing twenty years of my life, I somewhere find myself in the same place.

Patriarchy has taught us that we would rather do suicide than telling another men or women that we're hurting.

It has put us in a cage where speaking about feminism or equality among the genders or your public display of love or affection for your wife or your mother or your sister will automatically make you a less man or gay, and as if being gay makes someone less of a man.

Now while we talk about patriarchy, we cannot ignore that as much as it has affected women, it has affected men as well.

Men under patriarchy have witnessed great humiliation. Such as school dropouts.

Suicide- The global Male: Female ratio of age-standardized suicide rates was 1.8 in 2016, meaning there were more males suicides than females suicides.³

Death at workplace- Men 10 Times More Likely Than Women To Be Killed At Work⁴, War deaths, crime deaths, homelessness etc.

Every year more than 10,000 dowry harassment are found to be false. Given that close to 90,000 to 1 lakh cases are investigated every year, the figure makes it the most abused law in the country.⁵

³ https://www.who.int/gho/mental_health/suicide_rates_male_female/en/

⁴ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/chuckdevore/2018/12/19/fatal-employment-men-10-times-more-likely-than-women-to-be-killed-at-work/#6a2a231952e8>

⁵ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/10-of-dowry-cases-false-government-plans-changes-in-law/articleshow/46649047.cms?from=mdr>

In the case of Sushil kumar vs. Union of India supreme court held that “The fact that Section 498A is a cognisable and non-bailable offence has lent it a dubious place of pride amongst the provisions that are used as weapons rather than shields by disgruntled wives”.⁶

Now that makes it clear that patriarchy has corrupted a whole lot of people regardless of their gender. It also tells us that evilness is not limited to male or females but it is gender neutral.

We should remember that our fight against patriarchy should be collective and not gender biased. We should not forget that our fight is with a system and not a particular gender.

As we question lack of opportunity for women in male dominated sectors, we should also question women dominated fields such as nursing, teaching etc. We should break gender roles in society for all and not for one gender.

If we are a little optimistic then we will realize that in the next 50 or maybe 100 years, the world would be a better place for women. But can we say that same thing for men? Here we need to take a pause and ponder.

Gender surely comes with false expectations but we shouldn't ignore the fact that it also comes with certain privileges which we all like to enjoy and some set of responsibilities. We cannot ask for power of another gender while we want to enjoy the privileges of our own gender and don't want to bear the responsibilities of either of them.

The only way to fight this, is being together and being kind with each other. Because at the end of the day, little empathy can save us all.

⁶<https://www.firstpost.com/india/domestic-violence-supreme-court-verdict-on-section-498a-puts-family-honour-over-womens-rights-3870627.html>