

“Gender Discrimination”

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The world has witnessed enormous changes in the due course. Counting everything under the sun, the world has ameliorated. But one sect that hasn't witnessed much furtherance is 'gender equality'. In a layman's language we define it as a model society where men and women are equal. In delineated terms we define it as the state of equal ease of access to resources and opportunities, including economic participation and decision-making regardless of the gender. It also includes valuing different behaviours, aspirations and needs equally.

As per the dossier collected, the sex ratio of India stands at 108.17 males for every 100 females i.e., India has 924 females per 1000 males.¹ Apart from natural death the reason for such an imbalance includes killing girl child, domestic violence, rape, trafficking and many more. If there was a parameter to measure society's overall stance on females, the upshot would've been quite wretched.

Figures state that in 2017 an aggregate of 3,59,849 cases have been reported against women in India.² Amongst these reported atrocities, rape has been the loftiest. The 2012 Delhi gang rape and murder, popularly known as the 'Nirbhaya rape case' shunned the souls of everyone. The incident was so brutal that the misery of Jyoti can never be expressed in words. It led to mass protests, strike and demand for justice. 20th march, 2020 the rapists were hanged by neck till they be dead. Seven years of struggle for justice and a lifetime grief that took the rape victim and her family to task. There isn't just one case where the victim had to go through something so devastating; Unnao rape case, Priyanka Reddy rape case, Kathua rape case and those thousands of rape cases which go unnoticed and whose record are nowhere to be found. The wounds of woe might never heal but to reassure ourselves we pray for such victims to rest in peace.

We all condemn such practices but in reality, the victim is looked down upon because the onus lies on them. It is easy for the society to accept a porn star but a rape victim is hard pill to swallow. They believe if she was raped then it must have been her fault; she might have worn a short dress, she must have given wrong ideas, she must have been out till late and what not. The trauma affects more than the visible wounds.

Another rising problem is 'acid attack'. Laxmi Agrawal, an acid attack victim who later in 2019 was felicitated with the International Women Empowerment Award. Her face and some other body parts got disfigured in the accident but it failed to shake her valour. Her legal battle's adjudication was regulation in the sale of acid. An individual below the age of 18

¹ Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, *Sex ratio of India* (2020).

² Outlook Web Bureau, 'Crimes Against Women In India Continue To Rise, UP Most Unsafe' (*Outlook Web Bureau*, October 2019) <<https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/india-news-crimes-against-women-in-india-continue-to-rise-up-most-unsafe/340881>> accessed 15 June 2020.

years will not be in a position to purchase acid. Despite of everything, the year 2018 reported 523 cases under trial and only 19 of them ended up in conviction.³

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005, passed by the Parliament of India to protect women from any form of violence by a member of the family. But It has been observed that 77.5% of Indian women are subjected to domestic violence every year. Out of this, 40% women have been through the tribulation of severe domestic violence.⁴ The oppression has discrete forms; emotional, physical, sexual and dowry death are the major ones. Women are made to accept that their husbands shrieking, beating, abusing and even tormenting them is normal. Things like these have become part and parcel of every marriage where these are the attributes of masculinity.

‘Beti Bachao, Beti Pdhao’ (save the daughter, educate the daughter) has been an agenda for so long now but the reality has another face to show. In India, 53.7% is the literacy ratio of females, on contrary 75.3% is of males.⁵ The reasons are deep rooted yet visible to the naked eyes. The society no matter how much developed lives with certain primordial customs; according to which the young girl should be well versed with household chores and rest would be taken care by her husband. They surmise that education won’t be fruitful because the daughter will have to be married off eventually. So, learning how to cook, sweep, taking care of the family etc will weave a better future for her than education would’ve done otherwise.

Article 21A of the Constitution of India says that the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age six to fourteen years.⁶ This amendment helped in removing disparity of basic education amongst male and female students but none of the clause defined the succeeding steps towards higher education.

In a developing country where the odds of getting employment for any citizen are as low as a lady getting permission from her family to be a breadwinner for them. The story of grapple doesn’t end here. After bickering people at every stage if a lady manages to get a job, the level ups. Vishakha Singh vs State of Rajasthan⁷ led to formation of Vishakha Guidelines, the basis of the sexual harassment of women at workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. The only mistake of Bhanwari Devi was to aim at stunting child marriage in Rajasthan. In her failed attempt to stop an event of child marriage resulted in vengeance whose ultimate outcome was her gang rape by Ramakant Gujjar and five other men.

³ Pulaha Roy, ‘India saw almost 1,500 acid attacks in five years’ *India Today* (India, 12 January 2020) <<https://www.indiatoday.in/diu/story/india-saw-almost-1-500-acid-attacks-in-five-years-1636109-2020-01-12>> accessed 15 June 2020.

⁴ Ananth Ram and others, ‘Domestic violence and its determinants among 15–49-year-old women in a rural block in South India’ (2019) 44 *IJCM* <<http://www.ijcm.org.in/article.asp?issn=0970-0218;year=2019;volume=44;issue=4;spage=362;epage=367;aulast=Ram>> accessed 15 June 2020.

⁵ Ministry of Home Affairs, *Literacy and Level of Education* (2001).

⁶ Constitution of India, Article 21A.

⁷ [1997] 6 SCC 641.

For those ladies who are married and working, balance is the only option for survival. They are expected to take care of their job and household chores. The problem compounds when the baby is born. The responsibilities multiply overtime and, in most cases, she has to or is made to quit her job. Her husband is given the privilege of not assisting in daily job of the house partly due to his status quo and partly because nobody bothered to teach him to keep up with household chores.

Charity begins at home and so does the foremost incidents of prejudice can be traced. There are certain rules and regulations in every house but major restrictions are on girls. Be home before 6 o'clock in the evening; don't speak to unknown boys (but you can marry one you barely know); you should be well dressed from tip to toe before stepping out of the house; don't wear short dresses and the list is never ending. We all have been a part of such discrimination, either we were the victim or the doer.

The bare minimum a woman expects is respect; respect enough to not make her dumb driven cattle in the battlefield. Without women the world will be a miserable hell. Things will come to a halt. We preach goddesses but on earth we practice activities like infibulation (edges of the vulva are stitched together in order to prevent sexual intercourse and those stitches are to be opened by her husband on the wedding night).

The lady menstruating is not impure; she isn't the one to be blamed for being raped; no she is not the one to gratify your physical needs; she doesn't needs your approval on what to wear, how to eat, walk, sit, talk, what to wear or whom to talk; she is someone who deserves to live life on her terms.

Being a father, mother, brother, sister, in relation to her or someone she barely knows, it is our duty to support the females around not by doing much but at least stop doing some things. A little encouragement on her small achievements to making her self-reliant, small gestures can make huge differences.