

Gender, Sex-Progressive Society and Justice

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ABSTRACT:

In the famous words of French feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir: “one is not born rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine.”ⁱ

If we want to understand the progress of a civilization we have to see the position of women and children in that society and the treatment which is meted out to them. Gender influences everything from national security to pop culture, the international economy to UN programs. Gender is not restricted to a single set of phenomena, and it does not refer only to issues that affect women. The paper begins by explaining how gender is usually defined, how it is different from sex. It explains certain concepts such as sex, gender, gender socialization, gender stereotypes, patriarchy, what gender scholars and feminists study, and what makes the object of their study part of global politics.

Furthermore, in order to bring out clarity in comprehending the intertwined concepts more vividly, attempts are made to look into the status of women in Indian society by visiting some of the statistics in present times with regard to the position of women and try to have a holistic understanding of what the notion of gender justice stands for. Next it introduces several theoretical positions on the relationship between masculinity and femininity before examining the impact of gender in two spheres : a) global politics from the participation of women in decision-making to the very idea of the state. b) the global economy from transformations, in the distribution of work to hidden forms of domestic labour.

Various historical, cultural, and religious discussions are carefully made on the international perspectives towards gender justice, feminism and human rights. Methodologies followed are: empirical, case-study and analytical.

- a) **Hypothesis:** *This research proposes the hypothesis that there is gender injustice in society as a consequence of patriarchal values caused by historical and psychological components. We test this hypothesis by looking at world history, sociological perspective and divulging in psychological parameters for the same. We will also take an understanding of the relationship between masculinity and femininity. In the end, we will be able to conclude the causes and the solution to the problem of gender injustice manifesting in India.*

KEYWORDS: *Gender injustice, society, socialization, patriarchy,*

INTRODUCTION:

Society: A community of people living in a country or region and having shared customs, laws, and organizations. Sociology defines “gender” as a social institution constituting the division of people into two categories – “male” and “female”. Through the process of socialization these categories mull over into a mindset of what is masculine and what is feminine. Family and society being the crucial aspects of the same evolves an individual into distinct classes of “male” and “female”. This is the society which sociology teaches us or aspires us to be. Now coming to the society that we live in—the society of technology which questions every current aspect and the pillars of society—the 21st century society. The community of, male, female and what the documents define as the third gender now involving the realms of LGBTQ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer. The preferred term for the youth is “pansexual”.

DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN “GENDER” AND “SEX”:

Recently there has been a class distinction between sex and gender. Earlier the word “sex” used to distinguish whether the individual was “male” or “female”. The way of defining changed only recently—in the 1950s to 1960s. Now, “sex” is subjected to ‘male’ or ‘female’ but is not limited to these criteria. Slowly there was use of the word “gender” to define what a person represents or categorizes himself to be rather than of what he is born with. Sexologist John Mooneyⁱⁱ in his work gave a terminological distinction between biological sex and gender as a role in 1955. Prior to that, it was uncommon to use the word “gender” to refer to anything but grammatical categories. Gender is not a fixed phenomenon as it refers to everyone and not only to the two distinctions of male and female.

Considering the role of gender behavior in our society, there are some roles which are deemed fit to be that of the man and the woman. Let’s take the example of standing for student body elections (idea of leadership qualities) for the post of ‘president’ the viable candidate is usually the male and are propagated and supported for being bold, strong, courage; globally speaking this concept is reasonably established by looking at the male domination in politics. Female political leaders have had to compete more to come on the same pedestal as their male counterpart. History shows that some even had to take classes to make their pitch lower to incite the attention of the crowd. The main reason for this gap is how society perceives the two gender codes.

Though it can be observed that the concept of “gender” is relatively new in International Relations, yet gender defines a very intimate part of our lives including not only our family life but also our social status, our work life, our culture, so on and so forth. International Relations have the norms of gender at work, international courts, diplomacy or social movements, etc. Across the world this gender code determines how an individual’s life is going to initiate or begin. Whether the child will be born or aborted, whether the child will be sent to school for studies or held back to do the chores of the home, whether the child will have a say in his education qualifications or will be married off at an early age, what resources they are provided with if any; how they are perceived as in the society, literature and art. There is a social stigma which causes us to question not only the education system but also the basic pillars of human

rights. It is yet important to remember that gender does not exist on solidarity indeed it intersects with forms of power in a complex manner.

GENDER SOCIALIZATION:

Socializationⁱⁱⁱ has been defined by many sociologists. According to Ogburn^{iv}, "it is the process of learning the norms of the groups in the society." According to MacIver^v, "socialisation is the process by which social beings establish wider and profounder relationships with one another, in which they become more bound up with, and more perspective of the personality of themselves and of others and build up the complex structure of nearer and wider association." According to H.T. Mazumdar^{vi}, "it is the process whereby original nature is transformed into human nature and the individual into person." Thus, socialization is the expansion of self.

In many nations the role of gender is very rigid and the individuals are forced to confine and grow in that environment. This not only hampers the growth but also fixates the mindset of the individual. The main agents of gender socialization are parents, peers, siblings, school, society and religion, etc. The process of socialization starts at a tender age, they determine the way the child interacts in society with others. The common example of the boy child playing with cars and toy guns while the girl child being awarded with dolls and kitchen or doctor sets; we can even observe that even as a child the boy shying away from the toys which we classify as "girl only play with these" the same goes the other way around.

PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES:

There are various theories which explain gender disparities and identity. While biology plays a significant role in ensuring the sex of the individual, psychology determines the causes of gender differences. There are two schools of thought for the same-- essentialism; talks how the gender differences are a cause of evolution and society must enforce these to cause the smooth functioning of the society while social constructionism wells on the different social positions men and women take in the society.

According to essentialism, humans instinctively try to ensure that their genes are passed onto future generations but men and women develop different strategies to achieve that. Women ensure survival of their offspring by seeking out mate who can best help support and protect them. Whereas men can maximize their chance of passing on their genes to future generations by having many sexual partners. In this regard, men compete with other men for sexual access to women creating competitiveness and aggression. According to **David Buss**^{vii}, these are universal features of our evolved selves that contribute to the survival of the human species. Thus, from the point of view of socio-biology and evolutionary psychology, gender differences in behaviour are based on biological differences between women and men.

Functionalists reinforce the essentialist viewpoint by saying that traditional gender roles help in the integration of the society. According to **Talcott Parsons**^{viii}, women traditionally specialize in raising children and managing the household. Men traditionally work in the paid labor force. Each generation learns to perform these complementary roles by means of gender role socialization. For boys, masculinity is defined by the traits such as rationality, self-assuredness, and competitiveness. For girls, the femininity is nurturance and sensitivity to others. Boys and

girls first learn their respective gender traits in the family as they see their parents going about their daily routines. The larger society also promotes gender role conformity. In the functionalist view, learning the essential features of femininity and masculinity integrates society and allows it to function properly.

The notion of I am male or female is the main component of the process of gender socialization. **Sigmund Freud's** theory of 'Oedipus Complex'^{ix} in his 1899 book *The Interpretation of Dreams* theorizes that the children view their same-sex parent as a rival for the opposite-sex parent's attention and affection. The Oedipal complex occurs in the phallic stage of psychosexual development between the ages of three and five, this stage serves as an important point in forming sexual identity. School and family are one of the most influencing social institutions in a child's process of socialization. In adolescence the teenager relies heavily on peer review of his social life, decisions pertaining to personal life, thinking, view of the world and is now mostly guided by social media.

Culture has been seen as of key significance in the construction of gender identity. Education has been seen as an important part of this process drawing girls and boys into different activities and achievements. The emphasis has shifted from the individual's learning experience to the creation of the texts or representations that construct our notions of gender.

NEOLITHIC GENDER INEQUALITIES:

It has been researched and proved that societies with a long history of agriculture substantially grow patriarchal values and beliefs providing fewer chances of promoting gender roles. Having validated the disparity in gender roles has ingrained in the society from the Neolithic age^x before this period the gathering ability of food from the wild by women provided three quarters of calorie intake for the community thus nullifying the need for hunting which was done by men for their tribe or community. As time proceeded and caused evolutionary changes in *Homo sapiens*, the means of collection of food from hunting and gathering converted to agriculture; even as population grew causing land scarcity and limitation of resources, there was need of making tools and hard labour of lifting and ploughing was required thus the natural selection of man was established. This led to a division of labour within the family in which the man used his physical strength in food production, and the woman took care of child rearing, food processing and production and other family-related duties. The consequence was that women's role in society no longer gave her economic viability on her own. We can join a thread to the root cause: the evolution of humans and scarcity of resources caused women to take up the rearing of children while the men resorted to catering the needs of the community by agriculture.^{xi}

In ancient India as per the scriptures, women were kept on a high pedestal and treated like goddesses. The reality of gender inequality in India is very complex and diversified, because it exists in every field like education, employment opportunities, income, health, cultural issues, social issues, economic issues etc.^{xii} Studies indicate the inequality in economic, social, cultural and legal biases which are of a great challenge for policy-makers and social scientists to establish proper equality in the entire social field. Therefore, it is tough to pinpoint the actual source of gender injustice in India.^{xiii}

MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY:

Femininity stands for a society where gender roles overlap: both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life. Masculinity is the opposite of femininity; together, they form one of the dimensions of national cultures. Masculinity stands for a society in which social gender roles are dearly distinct: men are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life. The Masculinity and Femininity dimension describes how cultures differentiate on not between gender roles. Masculine cultures tend to be ambitious and need to excel^{xiv}. Members of these cultures have a tendency to polarize and consider big and fast to be beautiful. In workplaces employees emphasize their work to a great extent (live in order to work) and they admire achievers who accomplished their tasks. Feminine cultures consider quality of life and helping others to be very important. The international community has committed to bridge the gap of gender inequality through launching various programs across the world such as treaties, world conferences, UN resolutions and special organisations to bring everyone on the same page. It was on the Millennium development report 2011^{xv} of the UN to eliminate gender disparity while promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

INDIAN STATISTICS AND UNDP:

India being a democratic country caters to the need of 1,352.6 million people. Gender inequality in India persists despite high rates of economic growth, and is particularly apparent among marginalized groups. Women participate in employment and decision making much less, than men^{xvi}. This disparity is not likely to be eliminated soon. India's poor performance on women's empowerment and gender equality is reflected in many indicators, particularly, the low sex ratio. The government has launched several commendable schemes to save and educate the girl child and the national average has risen from 943 females per 1000 males. However, in many parts of India it continues to remain low. Gender inequality is also reflected in India's low rank on UNDP's Gender Inequality Index. In 2014, the country ranked 127 out of 146 countries with a value of 0.563.^{xvii}

The HDI(Human Development Index) of India is 0.67 ranking it on 129 in comparison to India's neighbouring country Sri Lanka which hold the position of 71 with HDI of 0.780. The GDI(Gender Development Index) of India being 0.829 while that of Sri Lanka is 0.938. GII(Gender Inequality Index) of India stands at 0.501 (2018) while that of Sri Lanka being 0.380; the GII of India has declined in comparison to 2017(0.522). Human Development Index(female) is 0.574 and 0.749 of India and Sri Lanka respectively. In comparison the Human Development Index(male) is 0.092 and 0.799 of India and Sri Lanka respectively.^{xviii}

As per NITI Ayog (National Institute for Transforming India) gender equality score for the year 2018 was 36 while in comparison to 2019 it is 42. With Jammu & Kashmir having the score of 53: highest and Delhi having the score of 27: lowest.^{xix} According to the United Nations Human Development Report, there has been a population explosion in the last thirty years and it is one of the biggest causes for gender inequality prevailing in India. UNDP has suggested '9 actions for sustainable development.'

As per sustainable development goal of UN, 1 in 5 women and girls between the ages of 15-49 have reported experiencing physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner within a 12-month period and 49 countries currently have no laws protecting women from domestic violence. Progress is occurring regarding harmful practices such as child marriage and FGM (Female Genital Mutilation), which has declined by 30% in the past decade. As per, India factsheet (Gender and Social Exclusion Indicators) improvements can be seen in gender based human development indices, with GDI and GEM showing a 14.8% and 19.5% improvement respectively. However crimes committed against women have increased over time.

CONCLUSION:

This research studies the hypothesis that there is gender injustice in society as a consequence of patriarchal values caused by historical and psychological proponents. First we argue the reason for lack of gender role is based on psychological factors which basically deals with two school of thoughts on whose basis we can conclude that the main cause for gender biasness is the biological factors which are embedded due to evolution as well as gender socialisation which starts from the womb; we learn from this research the knowledge of masculine and feminine perspective allows us to understand and fit into the society thus becoming an integral part of it. We also figure the root cause of distinction of male and female on the basis of gender and not sex; the answer lies in Oedipus complex defined by Sigmund Freud. Its analysis shows us the psychosexual development occurring in the womb has led us to be distinct in our methods of behaving and perceiving of what male characteristics and female characteristics are.

Secondly, we have argued that the reason for gender inequality is historical perspective in which it is tough to pinpoint the sources in Indian system due to many factors which have not been discussed in this paper in detail. Historical findings have established the cause of gender roles to be linked to not only agricultural practices but can also be seen in their burial system. Furthermore, gender is not a synonym for women; there are many instances where women are negatively affected by gender structures.

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ENDNOTES

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