

## UNDERSTANDING GENDER INEQUALITY : AN ANALYSIS

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### Understanding Gender Inequality

Gender inequality is the social phenomenon in which people are not treated equally on the basis of gender. Equality is a must have. This inequality is caused by gender discrimination. It is an age-old issue that is not going to be resolved in a few days. Achieving equality is not an easy task. It creates barriers in recognizing, enjoying or exercising the full and equal human right. Gender disparity varies from place to place, at every stage of life, beginning from childhood or even before birth. Gender inequality causes one gender to be routinely privileged or prioritized over another. Gender inequality occurs because of socially constructed gender roles.

It impacts us badly. It takes away opportunities from deserving people. It results in discriminatory behaviour towards people of a certain gender. It also puts people of a certain gender in dangerous situations.

It is seen in the society, women are deprived, barred, marginalized, disadvantaged in terms of rights, life opportunities etc. They are eradicated, not listened to in comparison to their male counterparts. Gender inequalities heightens gender difference. Culture, Social process, Social institutions, which are the components of social structure largely stimulates gender inequalities. Social process permits gender inequality. Every culture permits and prescribes its own expectation from male and female. Article 14 of the Constitution of India says that “The state shall not deny any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India”.

All are treated equal in front of law. Then why gender inequality persists still in our society? Reason may be many. As said earlier, culture of our age-old society had imbedded the dogma of gender preferences. A boy is always welcome than a girl child in our society. The parents wish to invest more upon a boy's education and health over a girl. Despite in 2024 modern era, female fetus killing is an issue. The PCP and DT Act– Pre-conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act clearly says gender of the fetus will not be revealed. This is so because there was a time when it was at high peak of female feticide.

Even today, it is seen in many parts of our country that boy preference is more. Male will work hard, earn more and contribute in the family. Male will perform more laborious work as they are

‘hardy’, capable and suitable for strenuous and tough jobs as compared to females. Male will marry and get dowry. On the contrary, female should learn the household chores, be expert in housekeeping, rearing children and give birth. This mindset is drilled deep in the thoughts of enmass, because, economy, finance plays a pivotal role in our society still.

The present should be survived for which male earning is more appreciated. Investing on girls still considered waste of money, Demographically it is seen that despite technological advancement, our society still have this mindset just because most of the social structure and other agrarian society, non-agricultural belt thinks women are inferior.

In other cases socially, it is seen that a male child or youngster is allowed to go outside the house to meet his peer group, tuitions etc. But, what is the scenario for the girls in the countryside? They are not allowed to go outside after 6 pm in many places till date. As the tuition centre is far, they are not allowed. Many are not allowed to attend night college classes even! In the city or urban belt the picture is different. A girl gets permission, many takes undue advantage of their liberal parents and go to pubs, theks, late movies.

The gender equality is seen in urban areas and will be accepted with time. Upgradation of education and thoughts are needed. If it is so, then why still the slogan “**Beti bachao, Beti Padhao**”! For whom is it written on the back of the rickshaws! Demographically, its still needed so. When India’s population is examined as a whole, women are at a disadvantage in several spheres. Despite men and women are granted equal rights, gender disparities remain. Gender inequality in India is a multifaceted issue.

Women in India have been stereotyped and discriminated since ancient times due to the patriarchal mindset. Social evils like Sati, Purda system, female feticide, dowry and domestic violence have been faced by women. Gender equality is a fundamental human right and that right is violated by gender based discrimination. Men are treated more competent and superior than women. Modern girls are not seen with good eyes in many places. Culture thus determines gender inequalities. It is barred in culture for females to use slang, to be rough etc.

Culture prescribes, the various category of names for boys and girls. In the matter of dress code too gender inequality is seen. The colour choice is labelled too. Blue for boys and pink for girls. Choice of toys and games are also categorically attributed to boys and girls. Thus culture promotes gender inequalities. Through the process of modernization, culture is changing with time. Gender equality graph is rising in many societies of the modern world.

When we talk of equality in women empowerment, we need to understand one very important concept. For example, in the movie “*Lapata Ladies*”; gender equality, feminism, women empowerment and equal opportunities of employment and education should be provided equally to men and women, is shown. Women are ignorant about their rights and potential. Hence, women empowerment is very much needed. How much struggle is involved, what takes into coming to that position and what betterment can be done for others has to be taken into consideration. The more aware a women becomes, the more avenues are opened in front of her.

There is a difference of notion which prevails that we term as power equations. Girls are categorized with a notion that she is feeble because she belongs to the pink category. Their talents and capabilities are doubted. This is where the notion of difference started, which led to the problem and landed gravely. Gender stereotype decides that the girls are more docile and want to please others and girls will sometimes sulk too long over next to nothing. Gender stereotype is harmful when it limits woman’s and man’s capacity to develop personal and professional goals.

Mrs. Sudha Murthy sets an example who broke the typical notion of gender stereotype and became the only female to compete her male counterparts in the field of modern engineering course.

In 2023 the Supreme Court released a ‘Handbook on combating Gender stereotypes’ to help members of the legal community identify and avoid the use of harmful language and stereotypes concerning women. It was released by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud. He has been very vocal about the matter.

Gender stereotype prevails in official letter’s addressing Sir/Madam. The issues have become so complex that it requires simplification. It is not achieved drastically because every time we talk of women’s legal rights, in none of the worlds, they have ever been equal to men. Women’s rights over their own bodies are questioned and misunderstood.

Next to point out, is, **glass ceiling** : It is the invisible barrier to success that many women come against in their careers. It is still as relevant as ever, despite propagandas, to get their higher level positions at workplace. These are implicit biases to stop women being promoted to leadership and executive ranks even when they have the right qualifications and skills. They are less paid than the male counterparts. They are body-shamed and mocked. Women’s confidence is undermined. Men don’t like to be under women bosses. They start backbiting. Autonomy of women is questioned in every sphere of life. Few men leave no stone unturned to malign a woman seated at the top position.

In Aruna Shanbagh's case, where the ward boy did not like to be bossed about his job by a trained nurse. This is the mindset. Jealousy also plays a pivotal role in glass ceiling for women in work place. Until and unless this comes to an end, the gender equality in real practice is yet to be achieved.



Image Source: <https://tissnetprep.com/gender-inequality/current-affairs/>

### Gender roles

Typically, men hold more of productive and manual role in working and maintenance of farm and field in agrarian society of India, than the women participation. Gender inequality is seen in land rights, productive resources, employment, payment as compared to men. Women are less likely to hold statutory land rights. 85% of women have only 7% land rights. Since women do not own land, they are not officially recognized as farmers and are bypassed. Women are deprived of authority and autonomy. Only Bhutan has over 70% land owned by inheritance practices and a strong legal environment for women.

The patriarchal social norms limits women in Indian agricultural sector. Rights dictated by religious practices also view women as inferior to men.

At micro level, imparting legal tenancy to women, benefits and land ownership can modify women rights and restrict gender inequality. About 60% crops are produced by women, despite that, they do not get the same wages as the men. Economic empowerment of women farmers

through vegetable supply chain has been of great help to women. Nowadays, with government help, women cultivators are gaining through multiple village awareness programmes. Equal opportunities in work and legal rights must be given to women to reduce the disparities of gender inequality in farming. Women join hand in hand for more shared goals of economic empowerment and women rights in agrarian society.

With the passage of time, technology has brought huge changes. Women are also availing this and scan the QR code for payment rather than being dependent on males to pay. Sustainable development talks about women and that is why we see when sustainable goal of United States, they are talking about the issue. Nowadays women are no less. They broke the traditional pillars of patriarchy and pursued professions like doctor, engineer, CEOs entrepreneurs etc. We see our honorable President of India is a woman.

Women are climbing Mt. Everest. Earlier men said women do not have genetic composition to become a doctor or study science. Women became the victims of gender inequality. If we talk about a teacher, one will have the image of a woman who is very motherly. Imagine a doctor; male figure comes first. A shopkeeper is always seen to be a male. Mindset talks about all.

Segregation was created. The ancient gender discrimination had started with reference from Manu Smriti. Earlier females could perform Yajnas, rituals along with the males. Since the era of Late Vedic period, the rights of the women were curbed. They were no longer allowed outside world activities. They were confined indoors. They were not allowed horse riding, to wage wars, perform Yajnas, chant mantras. Certain restrictions were always imposed upon women which is still continuing. Today too, many are not allowing them to shift, to come to the front. They are marginalized.

Even today many women do not have the freedom of choice of partners; as was seen in the Vedic Age. Women have become a marginalized section after that period. On the contrary, among the matrilineal and matriarchal society, women enjoy all the powers and rights. We have also seen that in 'Hira Mandi', and other tribal societies like Munda, Gadaba and many more, women have their liberty to select their partners of their own choice. Caste discrimination is also seen. Hypogamy and Hypergamy came up. A higher caste girl is restricted to marry a lower caste male. Same problem is seen in sub caste, clan etc.

In the present world, the scenario has changed. Women pertain their dignity, projecting and focusing on their work. Growing participatory role of women in all works of life is seen. They are very well managing work and domestic chores equally with sheer responsibility. In foreign countries work is shared unlike ours. Some or the other kind of social issues are created starting from child-bearing, child-rearing, family handling, cooking, shopping, working in either private

or government sectors, women are doing every thing. They even run their own business nowadays. They broke the myth and chain of traditional dressing sense too. The urban life of a woman is the best example.

Whenever any issue arises, it is regional in nature. It may be language or caste. Regional division of events in Haryana, Bihar, U.P., South India, Northeast comes up as a community. This turns controversial. Social norms come up in the limelight of such issues on the basis of region. Biasness prevails in every nook and corner of the country.

Challenges towards women empowerment and implementation of gaps with focus in the right direction will change gender disparity and inequality for sure. Not only with women liberty, strength to overcome the prejudices is the main focus for gender equality. Chief Justice Chandrachud has openly declared on many occasions, that the future in legal profession belongs to women. In other jobs too the same will be seen soon. Change has come and this is going to stay and last. Economic equality will take more time. Women empowerment is needed mentally, socially, economically in the present world.

Achieving gender equality means eradicating all forms of discrimination against women and removing barriers that prevent women from being fully equal with men and realizing their rights. One of the most widespread and pervasive barriers is violence against women.

Violence against women is fundamental violation of women's and girl's basic human rights including right to life and right to bodily integrity.

Violence against women is both a cause & consequence of gender inequality and is an abuse of power imbalances between women and men. It is a means of social control that maintains unequal power relations between men and women and it reinforces women's subordinate status.

Violence against women enforces that women are inferior to men, and that men have the right to control them. In 1998, the Commission on the Status of Women at its 42nd meeting agreed to "work to create violence-free societies by implementing participatory educational programmes on human and women rights, gender equality for women of all ages in all spheres of life".

Domestic violence is also another form of gender inequality. Women are vulnerable at home. In 2005 protection for women started. United Nations said to act to protect any type of violence treated with cruelty against women. The domestic violence act is Quasi-civil Act.

There are 5 types of abuses faced by women in both urban and rural areas irrespective to their education, work, social status:

- **Physical abuse:** It is wide ranged. It leaves scars on body and society.
- **Sex Abuse:** It includes humiliation and degradation of women. It uses physical forces, mentally forced consent and makes the victim's life hell.
- **Verbal Abuse:** Colloquial abusive terms used against women at home. It degrades women morally and socially. Many women are forced to accept this type of violence as they have no other option to step out of the household.
- **Emotional Abuse:** This is the most common abuse. Emotion is ramshackled and women accept this without leaving their household for they have many responsibilities and all cannot afford court-case expenses and live on their own and subsist . Gas-lighting , over attached mental trauma , manipulation, threatening wife all included in this category. This is the invisible scar. It is more damaging. It strips off the capability of women in the society. Men become fierce day by day and also include verbal abuse to downtrodden women at home and public. The wife has no respect. This is indeed calamitous.
- **Economic Abuse:** This includes undermining women every now and then. This strips women by not giving basic necessity, medical treatment and money to buy anything of her own wish, domestic expense, giving excuses all time to guard his own flaws. Downgrading women publicly to pay her own bill. Not giving slightest economic freedom. The scenario become worse day by day. The women is left with no options, either start working according to her capability, or ask for financial support from her parents or relative, or to live in abject poverty, or to discard such a husband and subsist herself with her earnings. What if the woman is suffering from chronic health issues? She has to unwillingly accept her husband's abuses.

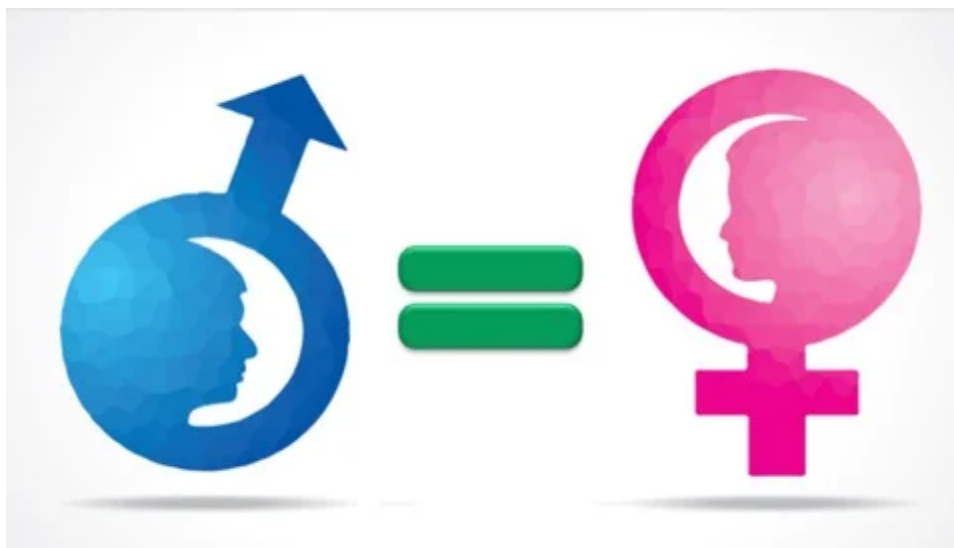


Image Source: <https://www.udemy.com/course/gender-equality-awareness-at-workplace/>

On the other hand, if the wife is earning more and meets almost all the household expenses, then the degree of abuse is more sharper. The wife always has to hear harsh words from the husband who is actually having inferiority complex. He has time for everything else but not earning and maintaining his own family. An orphan girl marries with lot of high hopes and dreams which shatters like a broken glass ultimately. Mental pressure increases with time and she is changed. For that too, verbal abuse is showered upon her. Woman is in vicious circle of dilemma and poverty. Mentality matters. It takes to be cruel, shrewd to abuse women domestically. Why can't the husbands change?

Efforts to tackle violence against women is very important thus. Protection and fulfillment of human rights of women, attainable healthcare to women, their right to have voice and decide freely of their basic human rights calls first. Its high time.

Develop policies, programmes to promote education for women and their empowerment and to give them gender equality in society is a very important task to fulfill. Ensuring programmers to eradicate extreme poverty are designed especially to promote women's economic participation, independence, sexual and reproductive autonomy, to prevent violence and provide services to women survivors of violence. Measures are undertaken to reduce partner violence against women and to support women's rights in all spheres of life.

Programmes have been undertaken to prevent violence against women. It should be seen that the old laws are amended and new legislation adopted to protect women's rights and stop domestic violence that is in line with international best practice standards and commitments to comply with human rights. Many slogans came up for International Women's Day to eliminate of violence against women in 2022.

## Conclusion

***To conclude***, we can say that promoting and achieving gender equality is a critical element of the prevention of violence against women. We need to get rid of the age-old traditions and mindsets. In a diverse society, equality is seen as a way of promoting respect and understanding. Equal opportunities to express themselves is very much needed for women. Significance of equality cannot be overstated. Gender inequality, has only dragged the society behind. To stop gender inequality, women and girls must have the space to speak out. Sexual harassment and child marriage must be stopped. Women empowerment is must.



Proper value should be given to ‘women’s work’. Women must be given power. Aspirations of girls must be raised. More access to education to girls should be the priority. Empowering women at work place will be a great boost. Women must protect their reproductive rights. Legal protection to women must be strengthened. More medical care to women must be ensured. Women must achieve better political representation. The most marginalized should be prioritized. Only then, gender equality will be achieved in the societies of the world.

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