GENDER AND CHAUVINISM IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

GENDER AND CHAUVINISM IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

Edited by

Gargee Chakraborty
Bonti Hazarika

Foreword

Gender and Chauvinism in Contemporary India, is our attempt to engage the scholarly community in academic and research. The 24 papers included in this book seek our attention to various gender issues and prejudices existing in our thought process and the need to address these prejudices. More and more discussions in the academic platforms would create awareness which expectedly result in reformation.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the contributors for their thought provoking articles, M.N.C.B.M publication cell and editors Gargee Chakraborty and Bonti Hazarika for making initiatives for the timely publication of the book.

(Dr. Gargee Chakraborty)
Principal
M.N.C. Balika Mahavidyalaya
Nalbari :: Assam

INTRODUCTION

Large section of our society is still governed by values of feudal and patriarchal society. It is not possible to maintain order by employing force all the time. Atmosphere of legitimacy needs to be created. Friedrich Engel's in his book 'The Origin of the Family, Private Property and State' mentioned that 75% of the cultivation work is done by women. Men do the tilling and lifting the crop. Another famous Anthropologist Margaret Mead pointed out that men have the capacity of releasing energy instantly. But Women have greater durability. Women can stand for eight hours while men can lift a heavy load instantly. Thus it is observed that men do not have the tenacity and durability to do long hours of work. Women can sit down for long hours. Labour at home is free. Labour outside is duly paid. The moment market economy emerged all the outside works are controlled by men. In fact, all the professions which involve payment are mostly run by men. As for example- tailoring, chefs etc. But Women do the same things at home, unpaid.

Political thinkers like Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau observed that all religions, be it Christianity, Hinduism or Islam, are male chauvinistic, patriarchal religions. Women making decision and doing things men can't do are still exceptions and not rule.

Discrimination against Women is deep-rooted in society. We must press for reformatory legislation but we must consciously critique male chauvinism and patriarchy. One way to do this is to replace old ideas with the new ones by questioning things which we believe to be wrong. Hierarchy of ranks, authority, age should not be occupied blindly. All kinds of subjugations must be critiqued. Here an attempt has been made to look into the contents of the 24 papers very briefly to give readers a bird's eye view on the book.

In the paper '*Empowering voice: A Feminist Exploration of Kinship and Motherhood in Jahnavi Barua's Novels',* the author Purabi Roy scrutinizes the experience of Barua's female protagonists, Kaberi and Loya in the novels 'Rebirth and 'undertow' through a feminist lens.

In '*Writing as Rebellion: Breaking the Stereotypes in 'My story' by Kamala Das'*, Rituparna Das asserts that act of writing can be a way to rebel against patriarchal norms and to challenge the gender stereotypes prevailing in Indian society citing example of Kamala Das 's work.

In the paper *Newly 'Constructed Masculinity' in Mahesh Dattani's Dance Like a Man*, Diganta Deka, Research Scholar, Department of Gauhati University attempts to explore the discourse on masculinity. Patriarchal hegemony and gender construction within the margin of family unit characterized by generation gaps as depicted in the play.

In *'Depiction of Masculinity and Femininity in R.K. Narayan's Novels',* Upakul Patowary, throws light on the intricate exploration of Masculinity and Femininity in R.K. Narayan's novels and the evolving gender dynamics of Indian Society.

Seema Hazarika in her paper *'Transgression of Boundaries in Shyam Selvadurai's Funny Boy',* narrates the experience of a Gay author and his character's understanding and experience of his sexuality which is different from the accepted norms of our society.

In *'Interplay of Tradition and Modernity in Mahesh Dattani's 'Dance Like a Man'- A Critical Analysis',* Kalpajyoti Mazumdar's write up explores the societal challenges and prejudices faced by female dancers and the expectations that limit their artistic pursuits, highlighting gender discriminations.

In the paper *'Right to Marriage: Routine Violence of the State and Extension of Patriarchal Control',* Dr. Neelam Jain focuses on the role of state emerging as an overall Patriarch, benevolent or 'protective' in some instance and violent and redistributive in other cases.

Shanti Priya Gogoi in her paper *'Patriarchy and Masculine Construction: Women's Experience of Nationality in India: The Politics of Gender and Symbolism',* deals with the concept of nationalism while taking a feminist perspective to look into the gendered construction of Nationalism and Indian women being used as sites of symbols and body politics.

In *'Gender, Society and Women in India: A Conceptual Analysis,* the author Mr. Debajit Boruah, examines how gendered ideology leads to women's subjugation within Indian social content using Feminist Critical Discourse analysis.

Gitanjali Dutta in her paper *'Issues of Patriarchal Dominance and Gender Stereotyping in Indian context: A Socio-Cultural Aspect',* attempts to discuss the multi-furious forms of Gender inequality prevailing in contemporary India related to culture, race, caste, religious dominance, discrimination in inheritance of parental property, occupational inequality, professional barriers, domination over the Marginalized.

In *'Deconstructing Stereotypes: A Comprehensive Study on Challenging Societal Norms for Inclusive Progress'* Navaneeta Borah, explores the multi faced issue of stereotypes in India society and the imperatives to challenge and overcome these preconceived notions.

In the paper *'Gender Sensitivity and LGBTQIA+ People: A brief reflection on Challenges, and Role of Educational Institutions',* Mr Kannaki Bora attempts to study the challenges faced by the LGBTQIA+ Community in the society and the remedial measures which can be taken by the educational institutions to reduce those stereotypes.

Bithika Nandi's paper *'LGBTQ Rights in India: Challenges and Government Initiatives',* explores the dynamic landscape of LGBTQ rights in India, delineating the multifaceted challenges faced by the community and scrutinizing the concurrent initiatives undertaken by the Government.

In '*Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace*' Deepanwita Mahanta, tries to discuss different aspects of Sexual Harassment of Women at workplace.

In the paper '*Social Construction of Gender Roles and Their impact on Women Empowerment*', Advocates Pongki Gogoi and Rajib Lusson Saud reflect on the Government initiatives that are expanding the scope of women's legal entitlement in various fields and the gap that exists in practice on daily basis. The paper also focuses on various Government schemes targeting women empowerment.

In '*Social Freedom of the Scheduled Caste Women living in Slum Areas of Guwahati City*', Smita Sarma attempts to study the level of social freedom enjoyed by women of slums in Guwahati city, mostly inhabited by the scheduled caste.

The paper entitled '*Breaking Barriers and Building Bridges: The Empowering Potential of Reservation Policies for Women*' by Archana Borah tries to examine the Women's Reservation Bill, as a catalyst for Women's empowerment and balanced political representation.

The article '*Women Trafficking and Violation of Women Rights in Assam*' deals with a very pertinent issue concerning the society. Here, Monoranjan Neog, looks into Women Trafficking, the socio-economic conditions of Assam as one of the factor responsible for the crisis.

'*Education: A tool for Empowerment of Rural Women*', Mitumani Rabha and Hiyashree Parasar's joint effort highlights various dimensions of empowerment in India through education. They analysed the reality of women empowerment in India using various indicators based on data.

In her paper '*Women and the Space of Art*', Dr. Nayak Amritanand focuses on the artistic space which is by far dominated by men and how women occupy a minimal space, regardless of their talent and quality. She scrutinizes the space occupied by women in the space of Art.

In '*The Disabled Female Body on Stage: A Study with Reference to Select 'Beauty Pageants' and interviews in Contemporary India*', Ms. Chandana Das takes into account the representation of the disabled female body on a threatrical stage, particularly in the form of the beauty pageants in contemporary India.

In the paper '*Empower Hermant: Flipping the Script, Women defying Expectations*', Ms. Arunava Borah attempts to scrutinize the portrayal of women as 'damsels in distress', the prevalent hypersexualization, objectification, unrealistic expectations, and standard that are set only in regards to women simultaneously for ever pressure of societal expectations.

In their paper '*Women and Environment: Issues of Integration and Confrontations*' Mehjubin Sultana and Rahul Bania attempted to take a look into the issues faced by both women and environment and the probable measures that can be taken to eradicate the concerns.

In the paper '*A Comprehensive Study on Role of Women in Environment Conservation*', Dr. Chitra Ranjan Bora and Binashree Gogoi tried to discuss the role played by women in environment conservation and sustenance.

Contents

EMPOWERING VOICES:
A FEMINIST EXPLORATION OF KINSHIP AND MOTHERHOOD IN JAHNAVI BARUA'S NOVELS

Purabi Roy
Scholar
Department of Women's Studies, Gauhati University

Abstract

This research paper delves into the rich narrative tapestry of Jahnavi Barua's novels, "Rebirth" and "Undertow," through a feminist lens. These works offer a compelling platform to examine the complexities of kinship and motherhood within the context of patriarchal societies. By scrutinizing the experiences of Barua's female protagonists, Kaberi and Loya, we explore the evolving roles of women, the impact of societal norms, and the quest for empowerment. This research underscores how Barua's storytelling serves as a powerful vehicle for feminist discourse, challenging traditional paradigms and advocating for gender equality.

Introduction

Jahnavi Barua, a contemporary Indian writer hailing from the north-eastern state of Assam, has crafted a literary legacy that resonates with readers across borders. Her novels delve into the intricacies of human relationships and societal dynamics, with a particular focus on the roles of women. In this research paper, we embark on a feminist exploration of two of Barua's works, "Rebirth" and "Undertow," to unravel the nuanced narratives surrounding kinship and motherhood in the context of patriarchal societies.

The feminist perspective, as an analytical lens, invites us to critically examine these narratives through the prism of gender equality, female agency, and the challenging of traditional norms. Barua's characters, Kaberi and Loya, serve as windows into the evolving roles of women, the complexities of familial relationships, and the transformative potential of female agency. Through their stories, we navigate the themes of kinship and motherhood, unravelling the layers of societal expectations and women's quest for empowerment.

Literature Review

Jahnavi Barua's novels intricately delve into themes of kinship and motherhood, illuminating the depths of human relationships. "Rebirth" takes readers on a journey of self-discovery and family secrets, painting a vivid picture of the evolving dynamics within families. Meanwhile, "Next Door" tenderly portrays the challenges and joys of motherhood, encapsulating the essence of maternal love. Barua's storytelling expertise shines through in her ability to navigate these profound themes, offering readers an emotionally resonant exploration of the connections that define our lives. Her novels stand as poignant reflections on the universal experiences of family and motherhood, inviting readers to contemplate their own bonds.

Rational of the Study

This study aims to explore the underlying dynamics of gender roles and relationships within families, shedding light on the historical context of mother-daughter relationships. By delving into the reasons behind the preference given to male counterparts and the persistence of patriarchal attitudes, we aim to uncover often-overlooked barriers faced by women. Through this research, I strive to contribute to the transformation of these dynamics, empowering women to enjoy equal freedom and fostering healthier, more equitable family bonds.

Research Objectives

1. Examine Jahnavi Barua's perspective on the influence of kinship in women's lives.
2. Investigate the transformation of the mother-daughter relationship portrayed in Jahnavi Barua's novels across different time periods.

Research Question

1. In Jahnavi Barua's novels, how does kinship serve as a mechanism for upholding women's societal standing?
2. Within the literary world crafted by Jahnavi Barua, how have maternal viewpoints evolved and metamorphosed over time?

Research Methodology

In conducting this research, a qualitative approach employing content analysis has been employed. The primary data source comprises Jahnavi Barua's literary works, specifically "Undertow" and "Rebirth." Secondary data, on the other hand, has been gathered from diverse sources including websites, academic journals, and scholarly articles.

FINDINGS:

Contextualizing Kinship

The Concept of Kinship

In both "Rebirth" and "Undertow," Barua intricately weaves the concept of kinship into the fabric of her narratives. Kinship, as a fundamental human relationship, is based on ties of blood, marriage, and adoption. It forms the cornerstone of societal structure and, as such, carries profound implications for the characters inhabiting Barua's fictional worlds.

Kaberi, the protagonist of "Rebirth," finds herself enmeshed in the web of kinship upon her marriage to Ranajit (Ron). She moves from her hometown of Guwahati to Bengaluru, navigating the transition from one set of familial bonds to another. This shift underscores the malleable nature of kinship and how it can be influenced by cultural and geographical factors.

In "Undertow," Loya embarks on a journey to Assam to study Asian elephants and to connect with her grandfather, Torun Ram Goswami, whom she has never met. Here, kinship is portrayed not only in terms of blood ties but also through the lens of caste and societal norms. The banishment of Loya's mother, Rukmini, for marrying outside her caste serves as a stark example of how kinship can be both a source of support and a means of enforcing societal norms.

Impact of Societal Norms on Kinship

Societal norms play a significant role in shaping the dynamics of kinship within Barua's novels. In "Rebirth," Kaberi's journey is marked by societal expectations, particularly those associated with marriage. Her familial ties are influenced by traditional norms that dictate a woman's role as a wife and daughter-in-law. These expectations shape her relationships with her husband, parents, and in-laws, highlighting the intricate interplay between kinship and societal pressures.

Similarly, in "Undertow," the Specter of caste and societal norms looms large over the Goswami family. Rukmini's expulsion from her family due to her inter-caste marriage illustrates the far-reaching consequences of societal norms on kinship ties. It is a poignant reminder of how societal expectations can lead to the fracturing of familial bonds, particularly for women who dare to challenge these norms.

Kinship as a Source of Support and Oppression

Barua's novels also illuminate the dual nature of kinship as both a source of support and oppression for her female characters. In "Rebirth," Kaberi's relationship with her parents serves as a lifeline in the tumultuous seas of her failing marriage. Her interactions with them provide moments of solace and emotional refuge, showcasing the supportive aspect of kinship.

However, "Rebirth" also reveals how kinship ties can inadvertently perpetuate patriarchal norms. Kaberi's parents, while supportive, also bear the weight of societal expectations and sometimes encourage her to endure her marital woes silently. This illustrates the complex nature of familial support, which can simultaneously empower and constrain.

In "Undertow," Loya's journey to connect with her estranged grandfather reveals the potential for kinship to serve as a source of healing and reconnection. Her pursuit of familial bonds demonstrates the resilience and strength that can be drawn from familial connections.

Yet, the caste-based discrimination faced by Rukmini at the hands of her own family underscores the oppressive side of kinship. It serves as a stark reminder of how familial ties can be instrumental in enforcing societal hierarchies and norms, particularly when it comes to women's choices in marriage.

The Evolving Nature of Motherhood

Revisiting Motherhood

In both "Rebirth" and "Undertow," Jahnavi Barua offers a fresh perspective on motherhood, challenging traditional notions of this pivotal role. Motherhood is not merely portrayed as the act of giving birth and nurturing a child; it is a complex and multifaceted experience deeply intertwined with societal expectations.

Kaberi, as a mother, grapples with the traditional expectations placed upon her. In a patriarchal society, she is not only responsible for the physical well-being of her child but also for instilling moral values. This added dimension of motherhood highlights the weight of societal pressures and the expectations that mothers bear in upholding cultural norms.

Similarly, in "Undertow," motherhood is portrayed as a role laden with societal expectations and responsibilities. Loya's mother, Rukmini, bears the scars of societal judgment and familial ostracization due to her marriage outside her caste. Her experiences serve as a poignant reminder of the far-reaching consequences of motherhood in a society where women's choices are closely scrutinized.

Challenging Societal Expectations

Jahnavi Barua's novels also provide a platform for female characters to challenge societal expectations of motherhood. Kaberi, in "Rebirth," grapples with the difficult decision of whether to continue her pregnancy in the face of a failing marriage. Her inner turmoil and ultimate choice to embrace motherhood on her own terms highlight the agency and autonomy that women can exercise in defining their roles as mothers.

Similarly, Loya's journey in "Undertow" serves as a testament to the transformative potential of motherhood. Her pursuit of self-discovery and her

decision to connect with her estranged grandfather illustrate how motherhood can empower women to challenge familial norms and assert their identities beyond traditional roles.

Differentiation and Gender Bias

One of the subtle yet poignant aspects explored in Barua's novels is the differentiation and gender bias that can permeate the realm of motherhood. While it is often assumed that a mother's love for her children is boundless and unconditional, societal norms can sometimes disrupt this ideal.

In "Rebirth," Kaberi's relationship with her daughter, Keya, reveals the nuanced ways in which societal norms can influence maternal love. Kaberi's struggles within her marriage and the emotional distance that emerges impact her relationship with her daughter. The weight of societal expectations, particularly those linked to gender roles and marital harmony, casts a shadow on the mother-daughter bond.

Likewise, in "Undertow," the differentiation between sons and daughters within the Goswami family serves as a stark reminder of the gender bias that can seep into motherhood. The societal preference for male heirs and the discrimination faced by daughters impacts the dynamics of maternal love. This differentiation is not a reflection of the mother's inherent love but is a manifestation of deeply entrenched gender biases within the patriarchal society.

Female Agency and Empowerment

Journeys of Empowerment

One of the central themes that emerge from Barua's novels is the journey of female empowerment. Both Kaberi and Loya embark on personal journeys that challenge the status quo and allow them to assert their agency in a patriarchal world.

Kaberi's journey in "Rebirth" is marked by her pursuit of self-discovery and independence. As her marriage unravels, she begins to revaluate her own desires and needs. Her decision to continue her pregnancy as a single mother, despite societal judgment, is a powerful assertion of her agency. It exemplifies how motherhood, rather than limiting her choices, becomes a catalyst for her empowerment.

In "Undertow," Loya's journey to connect with her grandfather and study Asian elephants is a radical departure from societal expectations. Her determination to break free from the constraints of caste-based discrimination and embrace her individuality showcases the transformative potential of self-discovery. Through her journey, Loya challenges the norms that bind her and reclaims her agency.

Choices and Resilience

The choices made by the female protagonists in Barua's novels reflect their resilience and determination to live life on their terms. Kaberi's decision to end her toxic marriage and raise her child alone, or Loya's pursuit of her academic and personal goals in the face of familial expectations, highlight their unwavering commitment to their own empowerment.

Both characters navigate a world fraught with challenges and judgment, but their choices resonate with the essence of feminism-asserting the right to choose one's path and define one's identity. These choices empower them to transcend the confines of traditional roles and expectations.

Feminist Discourse in Barua's Narratives

Portraying Complex Female Characters

Jahnavi Barua's novels are a testament to her ability to craft complex and multi-dimensional female characters. In Kaberi and Loya, she presents women who grapple with societal norms, face adversity, and evolve in response to their circumstances. These characters are not mere conduits for traditional roles but rather individuals with their own desires, agency, and capacity for growth.

Through their journeys, Barua challenges stereotypes and invites readers to engage in a feminist discourse. Her characters reflect the diversity of women's experiences and highlight the importance of recognizing the multifaceted nature of femininity.

Questioning Patriarchal Norms

Barua's narratives serve as a powerful tool for questioning and critiquing patriarchal norms. She confronts issues such as societal expectations placed on women, the perpetuation of gender bias, and the stifling of individual agency. By bringing these issues to the forefront of her novels, Barua contributes to the ongoing feminist discourse that seeks to dismantle patriarchal structures.

The portrayal of familial expectations, societal pressures, and the differentiation between sons and daughters within kinship ties serves as a reflection of the patriarchal values deeply entrenched in society. By shedding light on these issues, Barua encourages readers to critically examine the gender dynamics at play in their own lives and communities.

The Transformative Power of Literature

Jahnavi Barua's novels exemplify the transformative power of literature in advancing feminist discourse. Through storytelling, she creates a space for readers to empathize with the struggles and triumphs of her female characters. Her narratives invite readers to question existing norms, challenge stereotypes, and contemplate the importance of individual agency.

As readers engage with the complexities of kinship and motherhood in Barua's novels, they are prompted to consider their own roles and choices within a society that often dictates genderedexpectations. Literature, as a medium, becomes a catalyst for introspection, conversation, and, ultimately, change.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Jahnavi Barua's novels, "Rebirth" and "Undertow," offer a poignant feminist exploration of kinship and motherhood within the context of patriarchal societies. Through the experiences of her female protagonists, Kaberi and Loya, Barua presents a nuanced portrayal of the evolving roles of women, the impact of societal norms, and the quest for empowerment.

These novels challenge traditional paradigms, highlighting the complexities of kinship ties and the multifaceted nature of motherhood. They depict the differentiation and gender bias that can infiltrate maternal love, underscoring the need to question and dismantle such biases.

Furthermore, Barua's narratives serve as a powerful vehicle for feminist discourse, prompting readers to examine the societal expectations placed on women and the transformative potential of agency. By portraying complex female characters and questioning patriarchal norms, Barua contributes to the ongoing dialogue surrounding gender equality and women's empowerment.

Ultimately, Jahnavi Barua's novels demonstrate the transformative power of literature in challenging societal norms, inspiring introspection, and fostering a deeper understanding of the complexities of women's lives. Through her storytelling, Barua empowers voices that demand change, reminding us that literature has the capacity to illuminate the path towards gender equality and empowerment.

References:

Barua. J, (2020), "*Undertow*", first published in Viking by Penguin Random House India.

Barua. J, (2010), "*Rebirth*", first published by Penguin Books India.

Luikham. A.S, (2020, Nov, 5), "*Examining the Emergence of Feminist Consciousness in the Select Fiction of Contemporary North East Women Writers*", published by Rupkatha Journal, Vol.12.

Kakoti. P, (2017, May 5), "*Voices from the Periphery: Indian English Writing from the Northeast*" published by IJIRAS, Vol.4

Crossman. A, (2019, Sep, 28) "*Kinship: Definition in the Study of Society*" published by Thought Co.

Levine. E.N, (2008, June, 24), "*Alternative Kinship, Marriage, and Reproduction*" first published by The Annual Review of Anthropology,10.1146/annurev.anthro. 37.081407.085120.

J.A (2018) "*The Long Path to Selfhood in Jahnavi Barua's Rebirth*" published by JETIR1803336 (ISSN-2349-5162).

Mishra. A, (2020, June,13) "*Jahnavi Barua's Undertow weaves threads of displacement, kinship and politics into a layered novel*" published by Scroll.in.

Kakoti.P, (2021, Aug, 23), "*English Writings from Northeast India: Of Inclusions, Exclusions and Beyond*." published by Cambridge Scholars Publishers.

Chaturvedi. N, (2011), "*Review of Jahnavi Barua's Rebirth*" published by Academia. Education.

https://www.prettylittlebibliophile.com/books/book-reviews/undertow-by-jahnavi-barua-my-thoughts/

https://www.hindustantimes.com/

https://m.timesofindia.com/life-style/books/reviews/micro-review-undertow-by-jahnavi-barua/amp_articleshow/81494229.cms

PHOTOS
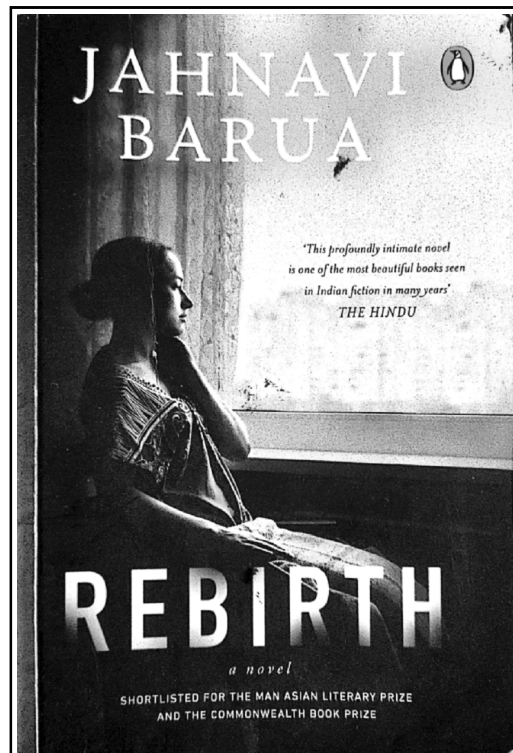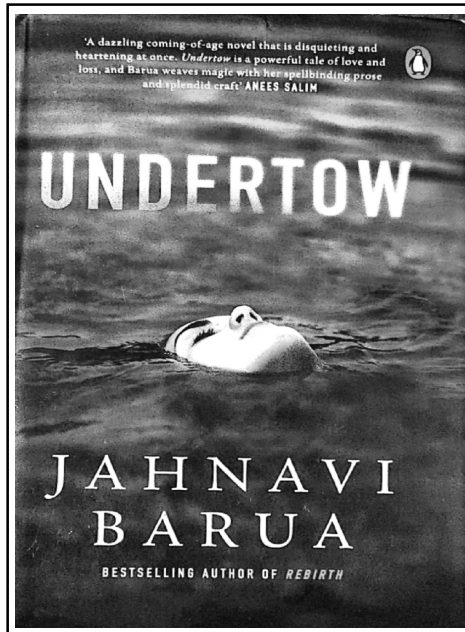
WRITING AS REBELLION: BREAKING THE STEREOTYPES IN MY *STORY BY* KAMALA DAS

Rituparna Das
Assistant Professor (Ad Hoc)
Bhattadev University, Bajali

Abstract

When My Storywas first published in Malayalam under the title Ente Katha in 1973, it proved to be a shocking reading experience for readers as before Kamala Das no Indian woman had dared to talk about her inner life in such an unfiltered and frank way. The confessional tone is a salient feature of Kamala Das's poetry and in her autobiography as well, she talks openly about intensely personal experiences - life of a woman in the traditional male dominated set up of Indian family, sexual abuse in marriage, her longing for love, her physical desires and quest for identity and self. The objective of this paper is to study how Kamala Das used the act of writing as a way to rebel against patriarchal norms and to challenge the gender stereotypes prevailing in Indian society.

Keywords: *Confessional, Self, Rebellion, Patriarchy, Society, Gender Stereotypes*

Introduction

Writing for women is empowering in many ways as it provides the opportunity of self-expression that has been denied to them by conventions set by the male dominated society. The tradition of women writing has largely been ignored and outnumbered by male writers. If we look back at the legacy of women writers, before Mary Wollstonecraft there was hardly any female writer talking about women's rights. Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1972) with its critique of contemporary views on women's education proved to be a milestone in the history of women's writing that paved the way for the women after her to address their gender specific concerns through critical discourse. Historically, the experience of women has been shaped by their sex and the

female voice has long been suppressed by the society that always favours men. Virginia Woolf in her seminal work *A Room of One's Own* (1929) pointed this out by inventing the story of William Shakespeare's sister Judith Shakespeare who was never able to write a word in her lifetime despite having potential for genius and ended up committing suicide because of the way society is designed averse to women. Women's literature, thus, had to come through a thorny path to emerge as an area of study for a group of people marginalised by history to tell their own stories against the stereotypical representation of women in literature by their male counterparts. Women's writing can be perceived from different aspects - personal and political, writing as an act of healing, writing as resistance, writing as a quest to establish identity, among other things.

In the oeuvre of Indian literature, till the 19th century the representation of women had dominantly been the product of male writers. A few of them, most notably Mirza Muhammed Ruswa's*Umrao Jan Ada* (1899) and Sharat Chandra's novels portrayed woman characters in realistic and balanced manner, but it was only after the arrival of female novelists in the literary sphere that Indian women received true representation in literature. Gita Mehta, Shobha De, Gita Hariharan, Kamala Das, Anita Desai, Mahasweta Devi and many others gave voice to the problems and issues that a woman has to encounter in a traditionally patriarchal society like that of India and in doing so, these writers often broke away from the traditional literary conventions. Because for women it is hard to follow the conventions shaped by men to narrate their personal experiences. It was needed for them to break the stereotypes and find a new language through experimental ways of writing to describe womanhood. Dr.DushyantNimavat has commented on Kamala Das'spathbreaking contribution to the development of the genre that defied the earlier conventions:

> "Suraiya or Kamala Das is the most outspoken and outstanding writer of the present generation, who has given birth to a host of women characters of unique distinction. The women characters in her short stories are all modern, sophisticated, independent, unconventional, uninhibited, and protesting individuals. She even goes to the extent of justifying free sex. Premarital and extra-marital sex is an all-pervading theme in her short stories." (Nimavat, 2014)

The growth of women's literature in India, though gradual, eventually became the most expressive form of art which is true to women's experiences. Through literature she found a voice to raise against the inequality and injustice that women have been subjected to for ages. Poetry became an effective form to reflect women's predicament in India; especially in the post-independence era. Poems of Kamala Das, MamtaKalia and Eunice de Souza carry a sharp critique of the oppressive treatment towards women in India by placing a mirror for the sexual discrimination prevailing in Indian society and showing how a woman's psyche

works in such an uneven state. Their poetry is intimate, confessional, autobiographical and rebellious in nature.

It is, however, the form of autobiography that can be regarded as the most representative genre of writing about women's lived experience by women. Being intensely personal narratives, autobiographies enable women to come out of the margins to tell their individual history and to defy the set norms of language. Women autobiographers such as Rassundari Devi, Baby Halder, Baby Kamble, Urmila Pawar,Kamala Das and many others have depicted and challenged the patriarchal setup of Indian society in their autobiographies. Their works mirror Indian women's position and condition in society and offer poignant accounts to understand female agency, its building and subjugation in India. *My Stor*y was an unprecedented work in terms of its bold manner of exposing a woman's private life and became a bestseller because it was relatable to countless women of that era and even of today's generation too. Her candid description makes *My Story* thousand other women's stories at various points.

Discussion:

Hélène Cixouspointed out the importance of writing for woman in her essay *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1975)that "She must write herself, because this is the invention of a new insurgent writing which, when the moment of her liberation has come, will allow her to carry out the indispensable ruptures and transformations in her history". For Kamla Das writing was a way to discover her inner self. Born in the orthodox Nair family, she was sensible enough to realise the patriarchal nature of her surroundings from an early age. Her father forced her mother to follow his Gandhian ideology and made her wear Khaddar only. The mother being a typical Indian housewife doesn't seem to have a voice of her own as "she did not protest" her husband's decisions.

As a child, Kamla Das often felt neglected by her parents and found solace in writing: "I was six and very sentimental. I wrote sad poems about dolls who lost their heads and had to remain headless for eternity" (Das, 2020, p.08). This cathartic effect of her poems on herself, remains throughout her life. Later, writing became for her a way of self-discovery. She communicates with her true self by giving way to her innermost thoughts, hidden desires through writing as she says once, "When I write I get closer and closer to my true self…It is an activity that cannot be shared so akin to dying." Writing, for Kamala Das, is an inward journey and it is well evident in her poems as well as her autobiography. Writing becomes a way of liberating herself from the male dominated family set-up, her loveless marriage, long illness and of expressing her desperate longing for real love and physical desires - things that a woman finds hard to talk about, especially in a conservative society like that of India. Kamala Das was married off at the early age of fifteen before she could experience discover her sexuality, to a man

much older than her and their marriage was never a happy one. From her husband she expected the comfort and security that she never received from her parents - conversation, companionship, warmth - all those things that she was deprived of for all her life. But the husband cared for nothing but his carnal appetite. Kamala Das refers to her marriage in feudal terms:

> "At night he was like a chieftain who collected the taxes due to him from his vassal, simply and without exhilaration. All the Parijata that I wove in my curly hair was wasted. The taking was brutal and brief. The only topic of conversation that delighted him was sex and I was ignorant in the study of it." (Das, 2020, p.89)

Her growing frustration with the loveless marriage and infidelity of her husband led Kamala Das to seek love outside her marriage:

> "I yearned for a kind word, a glance in my direction. It became obvious to me that my husband had wished to marry me only because of my social status and the possibility of financial gain. A coldness took hold of my heart then. I knew then that if love was what I had looked for in marriage I would have to look for it outside its legal orbit. I wanted to be given an identity that was lovable. When he returned to Bombay the first letter that he wrote was not to me but to a girl-cousin who had allowed him to hug her while he walked towards my home in the evenings. I made up my mind to be unfaithful to him, at least physically." (Das, 2020, p.89-90)

In her quest for real love, Kamala Das moved from man to man, having numerous love affairs which she openly admits in *My Story*. In her poems also, she writes about her search for love and experience of sexuality in extra-marital relationships in a very unadulterated manner. *A Man Is A Season* is one fine example of such bold writing:

> "...you let me toss my youth like coins into various hands, You let me mate with shadows, You let me sing in empty shrines, you let your wife Seek ecstasy in other's arms" (Paul & Prasad,2017)

The more Kamala Das's husband and family tried to tie her to household duties, the more her spirit cried to protest and escape from the trap of marriage. But she couldn't return as a divorcee to her family who considered a broken marriage "as distasteful, as horrifying as an attack of leprosy" (Das, 2020, p.97). Her lack of agency was also a result of her lack of educational qualification and financial independence. For a woman trapped in an unhappy marriage, writing became her most searched liberation. Poetry once again returned to Kamala Das as a ray of light in her otherwise dark life. After sending her poem for publication, she felt the burden in her soul as being lifted away: "My grief fell like drops of

honey on the white sheets on my desk. My sorrows floated over the pages of magazines darkly as heavy monsoon clouds do in the sky…" (Das, 2020, p.99). Kamala Das exposing her dissatisfaction regarding her marriage and her love affairs with other men so openly in her autobiography and poetry in itself is an act of rebellion against the patriarchal set up she was compelled to live in. K. Satchidanandan in *Relocating My Story* has revealed the attempts to shut Kamala Das's rebellious voice and her refusal to succumb to such efforts:

"*Ente Katha* was written during the author's treatment for suspected leukaemia. Her father, the powerful V.M. Nair, managing director of the Mathrubhumi group, had asked the editor to suspend its publication, but its proud author would be the last to yield to pressure tactics" (Satchidanandan, 2020). Her unconventional ways of writing broke many stereotypes associated with women's writing in India and even across the globe. She doesn't hide behind metaphors to write about a woman's sexual desires as many of her contemporaries used to do. Through writing Kamala Das achieves what Hélène Cixous suggests, "By writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her". In describing the experiences of a female body such as menstruation and childbirth also, she uses very direct language and graphic images.

Conclusion:

As much writing brought Kamala Das close to her inner self, at the same time, it distanced her from other people. No traditional Indian family would like its private stories to go out in public and that too, through their own daughter. Kamala Das had become an eyesore to her relatives who thought of her as a threat to their respectability. Her parents were embarrassed but totally helpless, because it was clear to them that she loved her writing more than anything else. She asserts, "If the need ever arose, I would without hesitation bid goodbye to my doting husband and to my sons only to be allowed to remain what I was, a writer'' (Das, 2020, p.195). In *My Story* she also mentions how her articles on free love had titillated many and she used to get phone calls from men who wanted to proposition her. Simone de Beauvoir, in her book "The Second Sex" (1949) argued that 'women have been defined by men and if they attempt to break with this, they risk alienating themselves'. Kamala Das went through the same kind of alienation but the iconoclast refused to sacrifice her newly found freedom and continued to use her outspoken writing as a weapon against patriarchy. A paper titled *Establishing theIdentity and Celebrating the Self in My Story by Kamala Das*, rightly observes: "In order to attain her goal, she dares to go through everything that is forbidden for a woman. She has realised that she must challenge the existing dogmas. She has started writing and behaving against the conventions in order to cope with her own emotional tensions" (Rajaeskaran& Jose). Isolation from society was the price that Kamala Das had to pay for the liberty and happiness

brought by writing but she paid it willingly as is evident in her own words: "As I wrote more and more, in the circles I was compelled to move in, I became lonelier and lonelier…I withdrew into the cave I had made for myself where I wrote stories and poems and became safe and anonymous. There were books all round me, but no friend to give me well-meaning advice, no relative telling me of my discrediting my family-name by my unconventional ways of thinking…" (Das, 2020, p.170).

References:

Beavour, S.d. (1949). *The Second Sex*. Harmondsworth Middlesex. U.K: Penguin Books.

Cixous, Helene (1976). *The Laugh of the Medusa*. Keith, Cohen & Paula, Cohen, Trans. The University of Chicago Press.

Das, Kamala (2020). *My Story.* Harper Collins Publishers.

Nimavat, Dushyant (2014). Indian Women Writers in English: An Overview. *Global Journal for Research Analysis. Vol.3* (Issue 1). 27-28. DOI: 10.15373/22778160 /January2014/27.

Rajasekaran, V. & Jose, Jasmine (2015). Establishing the Identity and Celebrating the Self in My Story by Kamala Das. *Journal of Teaching and Research in English Literature. Vol. 7* (Issue 1).

Satchidanandan, K. (2020). Relocating My Story. *My Story.* Harper Collins Publishers.

NEWLY 'CONSTRUCTED MASCULINITY' IN MAHESHDATTANI'S *DANCE LIKE A MAN*

Diganta Deka
Research Scholar
Department of English, Gauhati University

Abstract

The term 'gender' is used to describe the distinction between the socialized features of femininity and masculinity as well as the biological sex. It is a social construct that defines behaviours like masculine and feminine behaviour. Gender plays a hugely important role in society. Specifically, a situation in which men frequently oppress women and where women are assigned responsibilities that make it clear that they are less capable of acquiring and using arbitrary authority than men are. The term 'patriarchy' often refers to the system in which this power appears and is exercised. Additionally, men tend to appreciate the power factor and insist on participating in activities that are primarily focused on them. So, a man's identity defines his sexuality and area of work. Men also want to participate in activities that are largely about them and tend to appreciate the power component. A man's identity thus determines his sexual orientation and line of work. In his play Dance Like A Man, Mahesh Dattani takes on these issues head-on as a dramatist. He challenges the socialization of gender roles and the hierarchy of the sexes. The present paper attempts to explore the discourse on masculinity, patriarchal hegemony and gender construction within the margin of family unit characterized by generation gaps as depicted in the play.

Keywords: Gender Construction, Patriarchy, Hegemony, Masculinity.

It is impossible to adequately explain the nature of human identity in our modern lives using just one discursive domain. Identity has been viewed by gender studies as a matter of agency within the heterosexual binary. However, the ongoing expansion of gender roles outside the bounds of dualism calls into question the veracity of normative constructions. By establishing the idea of gender performativity, which aims to explain the tentative character of gender signification and leaves room for the re-signification of gendered bodies, Judith Butler has

challenged the complacency of gender studies. Gender, according to Butler, is performative and the idea that gender is performative explains how a series of activities lead to the development of gender identity. In her essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" Butler notes:

> "Gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed" (Butler).

She effectively criticizes the ontological essentialism of binary gender concepts like man and woman and views the body as a sociological signifier determined by tradition. She wrote "gender proves to be performative— that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed" (Butler). Being a socially conscious dramatist, Mahesh Dattani is concerned with how gender roles are evolving in contemporary India. In Indian society, where individuals are still viewed in the context of restrictive societal mores despite dramatic changes to the economy and society, he reinterprets and challenges traditional ideas of masculinity and femininity. His characters are based on the more affluent and urbanized segments of society. They appear to be the most forward-thinking and educated group under whose direction India hopes to overcome the Third World's disadvantage. Dattani, however, methodically exposes the contradictions present in such a society through a representation of prejudice, stereotyping, and dogma in the guise of culture and tradition. He uses sexuality and gender as the foundation for a polemic against marginalization and oppression. He sees a person's sexuality as fluid rather than natural or necessary. To maintain the hegemonic power relations, repressive society demands that everyone adopt gendered identities and repeatedly replicate these identities. Identity constructions serve to articulate the heterosexuality binary matrix and to oppose other manifestations of it. He reflects that "seems fair to say that certain kinds of acts are usually interpreted as expressive of a gender core or identity, and that these acts either conform to an expected gender identity or contest that expectation in way". (Butler)

To begin with, the phrase "Dance like a Man" functions as a performative utterance that simultaneously asserts that there are different dance genres and techniques for men and women.

Thus, 'dance' as the main theme, appears as the catalyst for the conflict between the characters. As the story unfolds, it moves forward to take centre stage, leaving the supporting cast behind. Eventually, 'dance' begins to develop a personality that governs the characters in the narrative. Ratna and Jairaj want to pursue their love of dance and make it a career choice; for them, Bharatanatyam is more than just an art form; it is who they are and what makes them who they are. A creative person who wants to express themselves through their art is thwarted in their efforts by traditional gender roles, which also force them to conform to the boundaries of this repressive social structure. Here, it is a 'male'

who is oppressed by patriarchy rather than just a woman. In the narrative, Jairaj is more severely impacted by gender prejudice and stereotypes. It is significant because formerly in Indian society, dance was not seen as a respectable vocation, either collectively or individually for males. In this context, 'dance' refers to societal obligations that must be 'performed'. Therefore, a close examination of the title reveals the performative nature of the expression, which, with the aid of linguistic conventions, acknowledges a fundamental form of 'Man' that, must be repeated in speech, gestures, and actions, or rather in such positive performances, in order to maintain the gendering status quo. Thus, dance functions as a jussive verb that expresses an order or demand in both of its senses: "artistic performance and conventional norms."(Bharati)

Jairaj uses dancing as a means of expressing himself and his feelings in the performance. He uses dance as a means of rebellion against his father's attempts to control him and make him live up to his expectations. According to Amritlal, dancing for Jairaj began as a pastime or rather a fancy that he had, which he believed wouldn't last for very long. Jairaj however continues to practise

Bharatnatyam despite his father's opposition and is eager to study Kuchipudi, another kind of Indian classical dance that originated in the village of Kuchipudi in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. His wife Ratna encourages him by dancing with him and giving him the strength to oppose his father. Jairaj displays rebellious trait even years after Amritlal's passing when, despite an aging-related receding hairline, he continues to wear his hair long, contrary to what his father had always wanted. Amritlal, who is regarded as modern and emancipated by other people in society, fails to embody this mindset at home because he forbids his kid from dancing and insists that he conform to the gender role that society has assigned to him. The concepts of independence, progress, and freedom hold very different meanings for both parent and son.

When Jairaj asks his father if he's never had any obsessions, Amritlal responds, revealing the difference in their perspectives: "If you mean my involvement in fighting for your freedom [...] yes, it was my obsession."(Dattani). Jairaj then exclaims: "You had yours. Now allow me to have mine!" (Dattani)

On the other hand, 'dance' must be conserved for Ratna by being taught by a traditional Dev Dasi or temple dancer like Channiamma. Jairaj dances to find happiness and the joy of dancing along with his wife. Lata's parents' passion helped her develop as a good dancer, and now it is an integral part of who she is. The grandfather, Amritlal Parekh, supported Ratna's love of dance only to maintain his reputation as a liberal and progressive nationalist, but he expressed opposition to his son choosing to pursue dance as a career. Viswas is a diminished mirror of Amritlal's personality who, without control over Lata's life, is unable to voice his displeasure with her dancing. Such pairings of characters also serve as a theatrical device to reveal the disruptive nature of gender signifying in performance. In order to retrace Jairaj's childhood memories, Dattani casts the same actor who

played Jairaj in the part of Amritlal Parekh. This exchange technique highlights each unique 'stylization' of the character that exemplifies gender roles in society. The actor just physically alters his part by enveloping Amritlal's shawl while adopting an authoritative stance which Judith Butler puts as "gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts". (Butler)

Mahesh Dattani has critically evaluated both the individual and the societal mentality of those who are bound by patriarchal conventions in *Dance Like a Man*. It can be analyzed as a family drama that depicts a fierce conflict between individual identity and hegemonic identity through generation. In the words of Asha Kuthari Chaudhuri:

> "Through the seamless movement in time and space, Dattani weaves
> in the intricate web of gender relationships and the givens of societal
> norm spanning three generations" (Chaudhuri).

The play does a fantastic job of presenting the stigma associated with the word effeminate.

Jairaj's father, Amritlal Parekh, is an intelligent Hindu freedom warrior and shrewd Gujju (Gujarati) businessman. He believed that males were expected to engage in activities that demonstrated their physical prowess, thus he had no idea that men might pursue careers in dancing. His opposition to Jairaj's career choice of dance was mostly motivated by the internalized idea of rigid gender norms. Jairaj has chosen a profession that was historically reserved for women, thus to Amritlal, he is not a man. Since the day he went back to his father's care, Jairaj has ceased to be a man in Ratna's eyes. Because Jairaj's masculinity is under attack in the play's milieu, he must repeatedly 'act' his gender in order to create himself. Hence, it can be said that Jairaj's gender is performative and that his repetitive body movements and gestures constitute essential signifiers in this performance's script.

Amritlal believes that the ideal role envisioned for his gender is not represented by this performative art. He considered the performance to be well as long as it was confined to his daughter-in-law, but the instant he saw his dear son performing the classical dance form of

Bharatanatyam, the ground shook beneath him. Even the sight of Jairaj's guru (teacher) with his long hair infuriated Amritlal:

> "Amritlal: I have never seen a man with long hair.
> Jairaj: All sadhus have long hair.
> Amritlal: I don't mean them. I meant normal men.
> […]
> Jairaj: Are you saying that he is not…
> Amritlal: I have also noticed the way he walks." (Dattani)

Amritlal's suspicions in *Dance Like a Man* subtly imply homosexuality. However, the play's primary means of presenting Jairaj's gender ambiguity is through the performance of his body.

It's noteworthy to observe that Dattani makes a subtle suggestion about Jairaj's body's suitability for feminine roles.

Language conventions are used to produce gendered bodies, therefore it follows that these discourse flaws and slipups are also present. The goal of repeating gender functions is to approach their optimal form. However, because the gendered bodies cannot duplicate an ideal form, it becomes a failing attempt to do so. Butler notes:

> "Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self."(Butler)

In these definitions, Jairaj's gender is also a 'mundane', 'repetitive', and even 'ritualistic' act in a performance that repeatedly repeats itself through different body gestures and acts. Since Jairaj occasionally dresses as a different sex, renegotiating his traditional gender roles, it even nearly resembles Butler's concept of performativity in 'drag'. If we look more closely at Jairaj's explanation of his performance as a woman, he claims that donning Ratna's wig and outfit made him resemble her. In some ways, this can be deceptive because any attempt to conceptualize

Jairaj's gender performativity must be accompanied by the understanding that it involves more than simply taking up a woman's outfit and choosing to be the woman he is not:

> "There's nothing crude about it. I danced the same item. For the army […] your mother was too scared and they only wanted a woman. So I wore your mother's costume, a wig and […] whatever else was necessary to make me look like a woman, and danced. They loved it. They loved it even more when they found out I was a man."(Dattani)

Hence, the conceptions of a permanent gender identity that a heteronormative culture tends to presuppose are challenged and subverted by Jairaj's performative gender, which is contingent rather than stable.

Even for Ratna, gender emerges as a performance of a different kind since Amritlal paradoxically endorses his daughter-in-career law's choice in dance, in part because it fits the traditional performative structure of the Indian woman in

her given gender role. Again, his approval is not just a quick nod of the head. Assuming the role of the Indian patriarch, he rules Ratna's movements and exerts enough control over them to win her support for his plans. When he finds out that Ratna visits the devadasi Chenni Amma and performs in her courtyard, he steps in right away to stop Ratna and stop any further lessons that, in Amritlal's perspective, would have damaged the prestige of his family:

> "Amritlal: And practice in her courtyard for all passers-by to see.
> Ratna: Only those who are curious enough to peep over her wall to see where the sound of dancing bells are coming from.
> Amritlal: Your bells. The sound of your bells.
> Ratna: Yes.
> Amritlal: The sound of your bells coming from the courtyard of a prostitute.
> Ratna: She is seventy-five years old.
> Amritlal: And people peer over her walls to see my daughter-in-law dancing in her courtyard." (Dattani)

Further, her claims that she doesn't think of Jairaj as a man because he went back to his father's care, she further exemplifies the contradictions that come with gender roleplaying. This reveals gaps and inconsistencies between tradition and practice, illuminating the uncertainty of social expectation. When Viswas tries to mimic the stern Amritlal by putting his shawl over him, he shows us the ridicule in imitation that can be seen in the forced portrayal of stereotypes. His performance establishes the upper bound on the frequency of acts specific to a given gender role, which always impedes the ideal performance of gender. He expresses the same patriarchal viewpoint on dancing as Amritlal, but because he lacks authority, his performance amounts to a parody of patriarchy. Jairaj, however, tells Viswas a story of having to perform as a lady in front of an army. In such a situation, dancing turns becomes a vehicle for marginalized people to assert their queer identity, which is placed beyond the heterosexual community's narrow confines.

Dance Like A Man skillfully skirts the boundaries of acceptable definitions of masculinity and femininity and asks how such frail structures can provide a solution to the possibilities found in Deka the subversive repetition of identities. It centres on Jairaj and Ratna, a husband and wife team that compete against one another in gender roles. They continue to examine their gendered roles and relive their life of servitude under the patriarch Amritlal Parekh as they do so. The play's in-depth examination of dance's role in societal function reveals how important it is for creating personal identities. Ratna and Amritlal's power play explores the power structures that control tradition and mainstream traditional identity. The playwright portrays the stigmatization of male dancers through Amritlal, which revisits the historical truth of the Devdasi tradition. In Viswas and Jairaj, masculinity

is portrayed as a performative aspect of the male body. While the latter subverts such codes by ingesting diametrically opposed feminine codes, the former can only copy the patriarchal gender codes of masculinity.

References:

Bharti, Jaitra. "Performing Identity: Gendered Bodies in Mahesh Dattani's Dance Like a Man." *New Academia: An International Journal of English Language, Literature and Literary Theory*, vol.8,no.1,p.160. http://interactionsforum.com/new-academia– Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. London and New York: Routledge, 2007.

Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist." *Theatre Journal*, vol. 40, no. 4, 1988, p.519. doi:10.2307/3207893.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: on the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. London: Routledge, 1993.

Chaudhuri, Asha Kuthari. *Mahesh Dattani: An Introduction*. New Delhi: Foundation Books, 2005

Dattani, Mahesh. *Dance like a Man: A Stage Play in Two Acts*. India: Penguin Books, 2006.

DEPICTION OF MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY IN R.K NARAYAN'S NOVELS

Upakul Patowary
Assistant Professor
Department of English, BHB College, Sarupeta, Assam

Abstract

The portrayal of masculinity and femininity in literature has long been a subject of critical analysis, reflecting the societal norms and values of the time in which the works were written. In the context of Indian English literature, R.K. Narayan, one of the most celebrated authors of the 20th century, offers a rich tapestry of characters and narratives that explore the complex interplay of masculinity and femininity. R.K. Narayan's literary career spans over several decades, during which he crafted an extensive body of work set in the fictional town of Malgudi. His novels provide a unique window into Indian society, and his characters often embody archetypal representations of masculinity and femininity. His characters often challenge and subvert traditional gender roles, highlighting the complexity of human relationships and individual agency. This research article aims to shed light on the intricate exploration of masculinity and femininity in R.K. Narayan's novels. It highlights how Narayan's works provide a valuable insight into the evolving gender dynamics of Indian society, offering readers a nuanced portrayal of characters who defy and redefine traditional gender norms.

Keywords: *Masculinity, Femininity, R.K. Narayan, Indian English Literature, Gender Roles, Gender Stereotypes, Societal Norms etc.*

Introduction:

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayan, popularly known as RK Narayan, is a luminary in the world of Indian English literature, celebrated for his evocative storytelling and portrayal of the quintessential Indian experience. His novels, primarily set in the fictional town of Malgudi, capture the essence of Indian society and culture with an astute focus on human relationships, values, and gender dynamics. A recurring theme in Narayan's works is the depiction of masculinity and femininity, two intrinsic facets of human identity that are deeply intertwined

with the social fabric of colonial and post-colonial India. RK Narayan's literary canvases come to life against the backdrop of British colonial rule in India, a period characterized by profound socio-cultural transformations. During this era, traditional gender roles were deeply rooted, and the delineation of masculinity and femininity adhered to strict norms. Men were often the sole breadwinners, their roles defined by assertiveness and dominance in family matters, while women were relegated to domestic duties and expected to be submissive. Narayan's novels poignantly mirror this historical background but also ingeniously subvert these norms in various ways, offering readers a nuanced understanding of gender dynamics in a bygone era.

The exploration of masculinity in Narayan's novels is rich and multifaceted. His male characters embody a broad spectrum of masculinity, ranging from the innocence of childhood to the more conventional forms of adult manhood. Swami in "Swami and Friends," for example, represents the innocence of youth and stands in stark contrast to the stereotypical image of masculinity. On the other hand, characters like Raju in "The Guide" or Nataraj in "The Man-Eater of Malgudi" portray more conventional forms of masculinity as they navigate societal expectations and personal desires. However, one of the most intriguing aspects of Narayan's male characters is their vulnerability. They often grapple with insecurities, fears, and doubts, which serve to make them exceptionally relatable and humanize their portrayal of masculinity. Narayan's men are not the traditional 'macho' figures, but rather, they are complex individuals wrestling with internal and external conflicts, offering readers an authentic representation of the multi-faceted nature of masculinity.

Narayan's depiction of femininity in his novels is equally intricate and thought-provoking. Just as with the male characters, his female characters do not conform to stereotypical gender roles. While some women in his narratives adhere to traditional expectations, there are numerous instances of women who boldly challenge these norms. Characters like Rosie in "The Guide" and Shanta in "The Painter of Signs" assert their independence and desires, fearlessly defying societal expectations. What distinguishes Narayan's portrayal of femininity is the presence of inner strength and resilience in his female characters. Many of these women silently battle against societal pressures, and their stories become a testament to the indomitable spirit of women in a conservative society, making a significant contribution to the broader discourse on feminism and gender equality. Narayan's storytelling prowess lies in his ability to explore the intersection of masculinity and femininity. His characters often exist in a state of flux, ceaselessly negotiating their roles and identities. For instance, in "The English Teacher," the protagonist, Krishna, grapples with his own vulnerability and emotions following the loss of his wife. This challenge to traditional notions of masculinity showcases a more sensitive and emotional side of male characters. Similarly, female characters like Leela in "The Bachelor of Arts" find themselves caught between the conflicting worlds of

tradition and modernity. Narayan artfully illustrates how these characters navigate these opposing forces, imbuing his novels with profound insights into the ever-evolving gender dynamics in a rapidly changing society.

Gender Roles in Colonial India:

India, during the period of British colonial rule, was a society marked by intricate and deeply ingrained gender roles. These roles were primarily defined by the overarching influence of traditional and patriarchal norms that had persisted for centuries. Gender roles during this time were clearly demarcated, with men and women expected to conform to specific social, cultural, and economic roles. The portrayal of these gender roles forms an essential backdrop for understanding the depiction of masculinity and femininity in R. K. Narayan's novels. Colonial India was a complex and multifaceted society, influenced by a myriad of social, cultural, and political factors. British colonialism, which spanned over two centuries, brought significant changes to the existing socio-cultural landscape, including the dynamics of gender roles.

However, despite these external influences, India retained a firm grip on its traditional gender roles, which were deeply rooted in customs, religious beliefs, and social hierarchies.

Men, during colonial India, were typically seen as the primary breadwinners of the family, tasked with the responsibility of providing for their households. The patriarchal structure was pervasive, with men wielding significant authority in family matters. This influence is exemplified in the words of the Indian sociologist M.N. Srinivas, who wrote, "The husband's position as a dominant male and a head of the family was almost taken for granted." In contrast, women were predominantly relegated to domestic duties, which included managing the household, bearing and raising children, and adhering to societal expectations of modesty and submission. The prominent feminist scholar Leela Dube remarked on the role of women in this era, stating, "In colonial India, women were largely seen as custodians of tradition and culture, with their primary role confined to the domestic sphere."

The British colonial administration had a profound impact on India's educational system, which, in turn, played a significant role in shaping gender roles. The introduction of modern education brought about a gradual transformation, with men and women gaining access to formal learning opportunities. Education exposed individuals to new ideas and values, challenging traditional gender norms and hierarchies. RK Narayan's novels often portray the clash between traditional values and the new ideals introduced through education. His characters, especially the younger generation, wrestle with the changing dynamics of gender roles. In "The English Teacher," Krishna, the protagonist, grapples with a shift in his own understanding of masculinity as he transitions from a traditional to a more emotionally

open and sensitive perspective. This transformation is emblematic of the evolving notions of masculinity in colonial India.

Colonial India was marked by a complex interplay of various factors that influenced gender roles. The caste system, which was deeply rooted in Indian society, interacted with colonial influence to further complicate these roles. Caste-based hierarchies often determined the extent to which individuals, both men and women, could exercise their agency and autonomy. For instance, individuals belonging to the upper castes had more social and economic privileges, affording them greater freedom and opportunities to challenge traditional gender roles. However, those from lower castes were often doubly marginalized, facing discrimination not only due to their caste but also because of their gender. RK Narayan's novels provide insights into this intersection of gender and caste. His characters, such as Raju in "The Guide" or Velan in "The Vendor of Sweets," come from diverse backgrounds and castes, and their experiences are deeply intertwined with the complex web of colonial India's socio-cultural milieu. Narayan's exploration of gender roles within this historical context adds depth and nuance to his literary legacy and contributes to a better understanding of the broader socio-cultural dynamics of colonial India.

Masculinity in R.K. Narayan's Novels:

R.K. Narayan's characters represent a diverse range of masculine identities, reflecting the intricacies of traditional and evolving notions of manliness. This traditional portrayal of masculinity is exemplified in characters like Raju from "The Guide" or Nataraj in "The ManEater of Malgudi." Raju, the protagonist of "The Guide," initially adheres to the traditional image of masculinity as a confident and assertive figure. He embodies the typical patriarchal role, taking charge of his family and societal responsibilities. However, his character evolves as the novel unfolds, revealing the complexities beneath his traditional facade. As Narayan writes, "He had been leading two lives all these years - one for the outside world and the other for his own satisfaction." This duality highlights the struggle between traditional expectations and personal desires. Similarly, Nataraj, in "The Man-Eater of Malgudi," personifies a traditional form of masculinity through his occupation as a printer. He is a hardworking and responsible man who provides for his family. However, his life takes an unexpected turn when he gets entangled in a series of events, challenging his conventional masculine identity and forcing him to confront his vulnerabilities.

One of the most captivating aspects of masculinity in Narayan's novels is the vulnerability that his male characters display. These characters often grapple with inner conflicts, insecurities, and the challenges of personal growth. This vulnerability makes them profoundly relatable and adds depth to their portrayal. In "The English Teacher," Krishna, the central character, undergoes a profound transformation

after the death of his wife. This event forces him to confront his own emotions and vulnerabilities, leading to a shift in his understanding of masculinity. He acknowledges, "I felt increasingly that in some past life I must have been a woman, or perhaps a eunuch," as he embraces a more sensitive and emotional side of himself. This transformation challenges traditional stereotypes of masculinity and underscores the idea that true manhood encompasses a range of emotions. Krishna's experience is reflective of the broader theme in Narayan's novels where male characters often grapple with their inner worlds. This inner turmoil serves as a compelling backdrop for the exploration of masculinity and adds depth to the narrative.

Narayan's depiction of masculinity is far from one-dimensional. His male characters embody a spectrum of traits, including strength, vulnerability, humor, and self-doubt. They navigate societal expectations, personal desires, and evolving circumstances, showcasing the fluidity and complexity of masculinity. Swami in "Swami and Friends," for instance, represents the innocence and simplicity of childhood. He is far from the stereotypical image of masculinity but is nonetheless a significant character in Narayan's exploration of manhood. Swami's experiences reflect the tender moments of growing up and the vulnerabilities that come with it. In "The Vendor of Sweets," Jagan, the protagonist, is a humorous and somewhat eccentric character who challenges traditional notions of masculinity. He is a sweet vendor who cares little for societal expectations and instead focuses on his unique interests. His character exemplifies the idea that masculinity need not conform to conventional norms but can be an expression of individuality and idiosyncrasy.

Narayan's male characters also grapple with the complexities of intersecting identities, such as caste and class. These factors often add layers of nuance to their masculinity. Characters like Raju in "The Guide" or Velan in "The Vendor of Sweets" come from diverse backgrounds, and their experiences are intricately tied to their caste and social positions. Their interactions with the dominant culture and the colonial context shape their expressions of masculinity. These intersections of identities further illustrate the multifaceted nature of masculinity in Narayan's novels. The vulnerability, self-discovery, and inner conflicts experienced by the male characters of R.K. Narayan make them relatable and human, transcending the limitations of traditional gender roles. Narayan's exploration of masculinity serves as a powerful reflection of the everevolving nature of manhood and adds depth and richness to his literary legacy.

Femininity in R.K. Narayan's Novels:

The representation of femininity in R.K. Narayan's novels is a multifaceted exploration of womanhood within the context of Indian society, both during British colonial rule and in the post-colonial era. Narayan's female characters offer a diverse range of feminine identities, reflecting the complexities of traditional and

evolving notions of womanhood. The backdrop of British colonial India framed the traditional understanding of femininity, deeply rooted in prescribed gender roles. Women were predominantly assigned domestic duties, including managing the household, raising children, and adhering to societal expectations of modesty and submission. Traditional femininity is exemplified in characters like Rosie from "The Guide" or Shanta from "The Painter of Signs."

Rosie, a central character in "The Guide," initially adheres to traditional expectations of a married woman. Her role is primarily defined by her marriage to Marco, and she conforms to the societal norms that dictate her behavior. However, as the story unfolds, Rosie's character evolves, challenging the traditional constraints placed on her. She emerges as a symbol of strength and independence, breaking free from the confines of traditional femininity. As Narayan writes, "She was treading the secret trail of rebellion." Similarly, Shanta in "The Painter of Signs" exhibits qualities of traditional femininity as she works as a sign painter. Her dedication to her profession and her stoic adherence to her principles reflect a strength grounded in traditional values. Yet, her journey is marked by a desire for change, an aspiration to break free from the shackles of traditional expectations.

One of the most captivating aspects of femininity in Narayan's novels is the strength and resilience displayed by his female characters. These women often silently battle against societal pressures, discrimination, and adversity, emerging as powerful and enduring figures. In "The Dark Room," Savitri, the protagonist's wife, is an embodiment of quiet strength. She endures a difficult and oppressive marriage, where her husband, Rama, is domineering and unappreciative. Her resilience in the face of adversity showcases a tenacity that challenges the traditional portrayal of women as submissive and passive. Savitri's inner strength is evident in her words, "It is enough that you are alive, Rama. When I look at you, I know how life is tough and unending." Narayan's female characters often navigate the complexities of intersecting identities, such as caste, class, and colonial influence. This intersectionality adds layers of nuance to their experiences of femininity. For instance, characters like Leela in "The Bachelor of Arts" or Shanta in "The Painter of Signs" come from diverse backgrounds and find themselves caught between tradition and modernity. Their experiences are a testament to the complexities of feminine identities within a changing society.

In Narayan's novels, femininity is not one-dimensional like the male characters. His female characters embody a spectrum of qualities, including tenderness, determination, humour, and self-discovery. They grapple with societal expectations, personal desires, and evolving circumstances, revealing the fluidity and complexity of femininity. Draupadi in "The Vendor of Sweets" is a character who defies traditional gender roles. She is an assertive and independent woman who breaks away from the mould of traditional femininity. Her interactions with her father, Jagan, challenge his traditional expectations of her role as a daughter, providing a

platform to explore the changing dynamics of femininity in the post-colonial era. Similarly, Daisy in "The Financial Expert" portrays a unique blend of traditional and modern femininity. She is a humorous and dynamic character who confronts societal expectations with wit and vivacity. Her character embodies the idea that femininity can be a blend of tradition and modernity, breaking the conventional norms.

R. K. Narayan's female characters represent a diverse spectrum of feminine identities, challenging traditional expectations and revealing the strength, resilience, and nuances that define true womanhood. Through his narratives, Narayan demonstrates that femininity is not a monolithic concept but a dynamic and evolving aspect of human identity. His female characters are not confined by societal expectations; they are empowered and inspiring, making a significant contribution to the broader discourse on feminism and gender equality.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the exploration of masculinity and femininity in RK Narayan's novels unfolds as a captivating journey through the intricate dynamics of Indian society during the British colonial and post-colonial eras. Narayan's narratives transcend the confines of traditional gender roles, offering a profound reflection on the complexities of human identity, the shifting sands of societal expectations, and the ever-evolving interplay between masculinity and femininity. Narayan's male characters, whether representing traditional or evolving masculinity, reveal a multifaceted portrait of manhood. The vulnerability and self-discovery exhibited by these characters challenge conventional notions of masculinity, expanding the canvas of what it means to be a man in the face of tradition and change. As characters like Swami in "Swami and Friends" or Krishna in "The English Teacher" navigate the intricate landscape of emotions, they blur the lines between masculine and feminine qualities, reminding us that humanity encompasses a spectrum of traits. On the other side, Narayan's female characters defy traditional roles by embodying strength and resilience. Characters like Rosie and Shanta challenge the expectations placed on women during their time, advocating for independence and self-expression. These women symbolize a fusion of traditional and evolving femininity, reflecting the ever-changing landscape of womanhood in Indian society. Ultimately, RK Narayan's novels challenge, redefine, and celebrate the intersection of masculinity and femininity in the vibrant and ever-changing landscape of Indian society. They serve as a testament to the enduring human quest for self-discovery, fulfilment, and the transcendence of societal norms. Narayan's characters, regardless of their gender, reflect the human condition in all its diversity, reminding us that the spectrum of human identity is as rich and diverse as the narratives themselves.

References:

Dube, L. (1999). *Gender and Caste: Issues in Indian Feminist Writing*. Kali for Women.

Kabir, K. M. W. (2020). *Toxic Masculinity in The Dark Room by R.K. Narayan and Night of No Moon by Syed Waliullah: A Comparative Study. International Journal of Multidisciplinary and Current Educational Research*, 2(4), 152-1591.

Narayan, R. K. (1943). *Swami and Friends*. Indian and Foreign Review.

Narayan, R. K. (1955). *The English Teacher.* Penguin Classics.

Narayan, R. K. (1958). *The Guide.* Indian Thought Publications.

Narayan, R. K. (1961). *The Man-Eater of Malgudi.* Penguin Classics.

Narayan, R. K. (1967). *The Bachelor of Arts.* Penguin Books.

Narayan, R. K. (1973). *The Painter of Signs.* Indian Thought Publications.

Narayan, R. K. (1978). *The Vendor of Sweets.* Vintage.

Rathod, H. B. (2017). *Role of Women in R.K. Narayan's Novels. International Journal of Advance Research and Innovative Ideas in Education*, 3(3), 1-52.

Saha, S., & Saha, S. (2018). *Modernity in a Traditional Society: A Reflection on R.K. Narayan's The Guide. International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities,* 6(4), 1-93.

Singh, P., & Singh, A. (2015). *R.K. Narayan: A Messiah of Feminism. A Critical Study. European Academic Research*, 3(4), 4048-40594.

TRANSGRESSION OF BOUNDARIES IN SHYAM SELVADURAI'S FUNNY BOY

Seema Hazarika
Assistant Professor
Department of English, D.K College, Mirza

Abstract

Born in Colombo, a Srilankan Canadian novelist Shyam Selvadurai is best known for his novel Funny Boy (1994) which won the Lambda Literary Award for Gay Fiction. The novel set amidst the Tamil Sinhalese conflict portrays abittersweet journey of a Tamil boy Arjie Chelvaratnam, his sexual awakening where he discovers his identity as a homosexual in the patriarchal society. The objective of this paper is to throw light into inner conflict and identity crisis faced by the protagonist of the novel Arjie where he tries to understand himself, his position and role in a society set with norms and gender differences. For Arjie it was difficult to adjust himself in his surrounding where gender was considered only in terms of male and female. It was an alien concept for not only the society in which Arjie resided but for Arjie himself to understand homosexuality. Shyam Selvadurai himself a gay has brought his own experiences in the novel. Told from the point of view of a child, the novel can also be considered as a bildungsroman which portrayed the growth of Arjie, his emotional growth, sensitively expressed by the author.

Keywords: *Identity, Awakening, Homosexual, Gender, Patriarchy*

The novel Funny Boy deals with Arjie Chelvaratnamalso known as Arjie. The novel sensitively portrays the problems faced by Arjie as a homosexual where he tries to understand his own identity in the society amidst the gender differences. Arjie is seen constantly fighting with his inner self where he tries to hide his feelings and when he becomes aware of his identity he keeps his identity hidden out of fear as he won't get accepted in the society. The chapters in the novel shows Arjies development from a small boy to a matured onewhere he learns the difference in his identity as a boy. The novel is set into six different chapters out of which the first chapter "Pigs Can't Fly",fourth chapter "Small Choices" and the

fifth chapter "The Best School of All portrays Arjie's development in understanding his sexual identity in the novel.

The first chapter in the novel "Pigs Can't Fly" documents Arjie's childhood period where he grows up playing with his cousins. Arjie is seen playing bride bride with his cousins where as a boy he is seen interested in playing the role of a bride instead of playing groom. Instead of playing cricket with his brother and his friends Arjie is seen having moreinterest and excitement in playing with the girls. Selvadurai through Arjie tries to show the realization of self where Arjie relates himself with the girls rather than being with the boys. Arjie feels comfortable being in company with girls and his fondness of being in a role of a girl or bride can be seen when he secretly admires his mother, when he sees her dressing up. Arjie had to fight for his position in the bride bride game as he was challenged and questioned for wanting to play the role of bride by his female cousins as it was unacceptable to be in a role of a bride being a boy. This is faced by Arjie not only among his cousins but he is taken as a matter of fun when his uncle and aunts get to know about his urge for being a bride. His parents felt ashamed about it when the matter came in front of the elders. Arjie is remarked as "funny" by his elders as they get to witness unusual behavior in his character which is not considered normal.

"The other aunts and uncles looked up from their papers or bestirred themselves from their sleep. They gazed at me in amazement as if I had suddenly made myself visible, like a spirit…Cyril uncle cried out jovially to my father, looks like you have a funny one here…That evening on the way home, both my parents kept their eyes averted from me"(Selvadurai, 1994, p.13,14)

Selvadurai in this novel not only portrays the difficulties faced by a homosexual but also shows the hypocrisy in a patriarchal society where all the rules and norms are laid down for the women and the burden which they carry on. This can be seen when Arjies mother gets buried with the blame for his odd behavior and his fondness for sarees and his father blames his mother. Arjie's mother ismade responsible for the wrongness in his character whereas his father is equally responsible.

"Amma turned away quickly, picked up her handbag from the dressing table, and said, almost to herself, If the child turns out wrong, it's the mother they always blame, never the father" (Selvadurai, 1994, p.19)

Selvadurai beautifully portrays the inner conflict of identity which Arjie faced. Arjie is found in a distressed condition where Arjie is seen caught and surrounded in a miserable condition as he is not accepted by both the girls and boys group. His physical appearance as a boy makes him unsuitable in the girl's "bride bride" game as he is a boy and the tenderness in his behavior makes him unwanted even by the boys group. Even though Arjie is forcefully sent to play cricket with his brother he was not able to behave like other boys which turned out to be fun for the other players. Arjie finally gets surrounded by loneliness as he has no company.

"The future spend the days were no longer to be enjoyed, no longer to be looked forward to. And then there would be the loneliness. I would be caught between the boys and girls world, not belonging or wanted in either. I would have to think of things with which to amuse myself."(Selvadurai, 1994, p. 40)

In the chapter "Small Choices" Arjie meets Jegan, son of his father's friend who started working in Appa's hotel and stayed in their house. It was then that Arjiestarted experiencing strong attraction towards Jegan. Arjie was not aware of the kind of feeling that he had for Jegan but he felt Jegan attractive. He secretly started admiring Jegan and started feeling differently for him.

"The muscles of his arms and neck, which would have been visible on a fairer person, were hidden by the darkness of his skin. It was only when I was close to him that I had noticed them. Now I admired how well built he was, the way his thighs pressed against his trousers" (Selvadurai, 1994, p.161)

Arjie started realizing that the feeling for Jegan is against the norms of the society and that he is not same like his brother Diggy, that he does feel differently when he looks at men and understood that his feelings are not normal and therefore he starts hiding himself, his inner self from his family and the society. In this chapter Arjies self-realization develops where he realised the biological changes in his body which led him into a different path. Arjie is confusedand tried to hide his real self and escaped from his true self in order to live up to the expectations of the society.

"Lately, I had found that I looked at men, at the way they were built, the grace with which they carried themselves, the strength of their gestures and movements. Sometimes these men were present in my dreams. I felt the reason for this sudden admiration of men had to do with my distress over the recent changes in my own body"(Selvadurai, 1994, p.161)

The chapter "The Best School of All" is the turning point in Arjie's life as Arjie is seen accepting his true identity when he gets to meet his sexual partner Shehan, a Sinhalese boy his classmate in his new school The Queen Victoria Academy. Arjie is enrolled in the Victoria Academy as his father is worried about Arjie taking different path and thus believed that the academy will bring the characteristics of a man in his son, and when Arjie tried to convince his father not to send him in the academy his father concludes by saying that "The Academy will force you to become a man" Arjie struggles hard to fit in the new school and there he becomes friend with Shehan who later turns into his sexual partner. Being a homosexual Shehan is marginalized in his class and hardly he has any friends and is sexually exploited by the school prefect. His brother Diggy tries to warn him and says to stay away from Shehan as the whole school knows about Shehan's sexuality and Diggy informs Arjie that "He has sex with the head prefect. He lets the head prefect do all kinds of things to him" (Selvadurai, 1994, p.232). Diggy does not want his brother to face the same situation in school like Shehan and tells

him that " if you remain Soyza's friend people will think you are like him and you will become the laughing-stock of the whole school"(Selvadurai, 1994, p.232). Arjie was filled with doubt and confusions and could not believe when he heard all this from his brother Diggy. It was at this stage that Arjie realized all about homosexuality and later when he laid in his bed Arjie "tried again to imagine Soyza and the head prefect together. At fourteen, I was aware of what the sex between a man and a woman entailed. But between two boys?" (Selvadurai, 1994, p.233).

Later when Shehan came close to Arjie and got involved in sexual activity with him, Arjie was burdened with the feeling of guilt for betraying his family's trust. He says "I looked around at my family and I saw had committed a terrible crime against them, against the trust and love they had given me"(Selvadurai, 1994, p.262).Arjie after experiencing sexual activity with Shehan for the first time he starts realizing it as a mistake, for Arjie it turned out to be sin which he shouldn't have committed and starts regretting and thinking about his father's concern and behavior towards him. He understood why he sensed certain level of worry on his father whenever there was conversation regarding Arjie. Arjie's moment of realization can be understood in these lines"Now I understood my father's concern, why there had been right to try to protect me from what he feared was inside me, but he had failed. What I had done in the garage had moved me beyond his hand"(Selvadurai, 1994, p.262). After his exposure to sexuality by Shehan, there was an awakening in Arjie regarding his identity. He felt the dark side of his own self which he never wanted to expose to his parents. Arjie was caught between the feeling of guilt and desire of having committed such an act and though the experience was new to him he longed to feel it again. "For the remainder of the night, Itossed and turned restlessly in my bed, torn between my desire for Shehan and disgust at that desire"(Selvadurai, 1994, p.266). Arjie was filled with "conflicting feeing"(Selvadurai, 1994, p.266)for Shehan, he was confused about the relation which he shared with him.

Arjie finally realizes that he had stepped into a different world which cannot be accepted by his family. He felt sad as he cannot share with his mother the experiences he had. As he knew that his mother won't understand the relation between him and Shehan. He feels the distance that has developed between him and his mother because of his identity which he tried to hide from everyone. Arjie is seen aware of his identity and the world in which he resides.

"What had happened between Shehan and me over the last few days had changed my relationship with her forever. I was no longer a part of my family in the same way. I now inhabited a world they didn't understand and into which they couldn't follow me" (Selvadurai, 1994, p.285).

In the last chapter of the novel "Riot journal: An Epilogue" Arjie had to leave his place as it was torn with violence. "I began to ride up the road, and the rain suddenly started, falling in great torrents, as it does during the monsoon season.

When I reached the top of the road, I could not prevent myself from turning back to look at the house one last time" (Selvadurai, 1994, p.312). Arjie and Shehan supported each other emotionally during the political tensions which turned into violent riot. At the end of the novel Arjieis seen as a matured boy, as he turned into an emotionally strong boy handling situations more maturely. Even before leaving his country Arjie did not reveal his relationship with Shehan though his brother Diggy suspected them but was not enough sure of being correct.

Selvadurai sensitively brings out picture of a small boy, his journey towards maturity and realization of self. Arjie's is shown transgressing his boundaries which is set between the binary division of male and female. Arjie broke the norms of the society and got into a relationship with his classmate Shehan. His family constantly tried to keep Arjie away from getting involved with girls as they were somewhat aware of his sexuality. Selvadurai in the novel shows how Arjie was caught between the distinction of a boy and a girl and suffered constantly fighting for his individual freedom. In the novel Selvadurai shows Arjie transgressing his boundaries not only by falling in love with the same gender, his classmate Shehan but also in reducing the differences between the Tamils and Sinhalese by coming close to Shehan. The sexual awakening in Arjiein the fourth chapter portrays a change in Arjie as he gradually learns about his homosexual identity and his existence in a society which considered it to be forbidden. Selvadurai's novel throws light into homosexuality, a topic which is generally avoided in discussion or is never given a chance to be brought into light in society. Through Arjie he highlights different sexuality other than the known and accepted two, the inner conflict and trauma that a boy suffered while growing up in a closed society.

References:

Selvadurai, Shyam. (1994). *Funny Boy.* India: Penguin Books India

Wordsbycrafters. (June 2021). *"The Funny Boy"- A Homosexual Novel of Searching Identity*. Retrieved from https://eduindex.org/2021/06/26/the-funny-boy-a-homosexual-novel-of-searching-identity/

UK Essays. (November 2018). ShyamSelvadurairs Funny Boy Analysis English Literature Essay. Retrieved from https://www.ukessays.com/essays/english-literature/shyam-selvadurairs-funny-boy-analysis-english-literature-essay.php?vref=1

Jenitta. S. Maria Bridget. (2019). *The Theme of Homosexuaity in ShyamSelvadurai's Funny Boy And The Hungry Ghosts,* Jetir, 6(2349-5162),file:///C:/Users/User/Desktop/JETIR1902C59.pdf

INTERPLAY OF TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN MAHESH DATTANI'S 'DANCE LIKE A MAN' A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Kalpajyoti Mazumdar

Abstract

This paper seeks to examine Mahesh Dattani's "Dance Like A Man" from the perspective of gender. Duttani is a leading playwright of modern time. "Dance Like a Man" explores the challenges and prejudices faced by female dancers and the societal expectations that limit their artistic pursuits. The play highlights how gender discrimination can affect individuals' aspirations and talents in the world of dance. It's a thought-provoking work that sheds light on these important issues.

***Keywords:** Bharatanatyam, Gender discrimination, Equality, Patriarchy.*

Introduction:

Mahesh Dattani (1958) is an Indian director, actor, playwright and writer who wrote such plays as "Final Solutions," "DanceLike a Man", "Bravely Fought the Queen", "On a Muggy Night in Mumbai", "Tara, Thirty Days in September 2007"and "The Big Fat City". Mahesh Dattani is one of the popular dramatists in Indian English Literature, who has the honour of winning Sahitya Akademi award for Final Solutions and Other Plays in the year 1998. The themes of his plays have attracted and influenced the attention of a great number of readers and audiences in theatres. He has tried to bring hidden issues of society such as plight of women and transgender, gender discrimination, homosexuality, child sex abuse and so on into light through his works. He has realistically depicted the problems of city life in India in a significant manner in his plays. He has a striking artistic mind that makes him different from other dramatists like his contemporary Girish Karnad and his predecessors like Michael Madhusudhan Dutt. In "Dance Like a Man," Bharatanatyam is not just a dance form; it is a symbol of the characters' struggles, desires, and the complexities of their lives. The play uses Bharatanatyam as a metaphor to explore themes of tradition, gender, identity, and the pursuit of personal and artistic fulfilment in the context of Indian society. Bharatanatyam, a

classical Indian dance form, is often described as a metaphor for various aspects of life and art. One common metaphor is that Bharatanatyam is like a "language of the body." In the play "Dance Like a Man" by Mahesh Dattani, Bharatanatyam plays a significant role in the lives of the characters and serves as a thematic backdrop. The story revolves around a family of Bharatanatyam dancers and explores the following aspects of how Bharatanatyam works in the context of the play. The artist explains the dark side of life and creates awareness among people.

Objectives of the study:

To examine how Bharatanatyam intertwined with gender of the play.

Methodology:

The article has been prepared with the help of books and articles written by reputed authors as secondary source.

Discussion:

Bharatanatyam is a traditional Indian classical dance form that originated in Tamil Nadu. It is known for its intricate footwork, expressive hand gestures, and elaborate facial expressions, which are used to convey stories and themes from Indian mythology and culture. It's a highly disciplined and expressive art form with a rich history.

Bharatanatyam is juxtaposed with modern values and aspirations. The characters are deeply rooted in the traditions of Bharatanatyam, which represents their cultural heritage and values. However, they must grapple with the changing world around them, characterized by more liberal and modern ideals. This contrast between tradition and modernity is evident in the conflicts that arise within the family.

The plot of "Dance Like a Man" revolves around the lives of a Bharatanatyam dancer couple, Jairaj and Ratna, and their daughter Lata. The play is set in South India and unfolds over two timelines, interweaving the past and the present to reveal the complexities of their relationships and societal pressures. The play begins with the older Jairaj and Ratna preparing for a visit from a renowned critic who is coming to their home to watch their daughter, Lata's, performance. The story then shifts to the past, exploring how Jairaj and Ratna first met and fell in love. They both share a deep passion for dance and aspire to make a mark in the field of classical Indian dance.The narrative also delves into the challenges they face due to societal expectations and their family's disapproval of their artistic pursuits. Their love and passion for dance create friction in their family. In the present timeline, Jairaj and Ratna have aged, and their daughter Lata has grown up. Lata, however, is reluctant to continue with the family tradition of dance. She is more interested in pursuing a career in economics, which disappoints her parents.The

impending visit of the critic forces the family to confront their past and the choices they made. This leads to conflicts and revelations, particularly regarding the sacrifices Ratna made for her family and her art. As the play unfolds, secrets from the past are revealed, shedding light on the reasons behind certain decisions made by Jairaj and Ratna. The characters confront their regrets and the impact of societal expectations on their ages. The play comes to a climax during the critic's visit, where Lata performs a dance piece, and the family confronts their emotions and choices. The final act explores the resolution of the conflicts within the family and the characters' acceptance of their past and present. The play skilfully weaves together the past and present, using dance as a metaphor for the characters' struggles with gender discrimination, societal expectations, and personal fulfilment. It ultimately portrays a family's journey through love, art, sacrifice, and the consequences of choices made in the face of societal pressures.

The conflict between the older generation (Amma and Appa) and the younger generation (Ratna and Jairaj) is a central element of the play. The older generation insists on preserving the traditional aspects of Bharatanatyam and their family's reputation, reflecting their adherence to tradition. In contrast, the younger generation seeks individuality and the freedom to make their own choices, embodying more modern values.

Jairaj, often referred to as Jairam, is one of the central characters in Mahesh Dattani's play "Dance Like a Man." He is a complex character whose portrayal is integral to the themes of the play. Jairaj is a highly passionate and talented Bharatanatyam dancer. He is dedicated to his art and aspires to make a name for himself in the world of classical Indian dance. His passion for dance is a driving force in his life. Jairaj challenges traditional gender roles by pursuing a career in dance, which is often seen as a feminine art form in the societal context of the play. His determination to break free from gender stereotypes and societal expectations is a key aspect of his character. Jairaj's character is marked by the conflict between his passion for dance and his family's expectations. He faces pressure from his parents to conform to societal norms, particularly when it comes to his relationship with Ratna. Their love for each other and their shared passion for dance initially bring them together, but the pressures of family and societal expectations strain their relationship over time. As the play unfolds, Jairaj's character grapples with regrets and the consequences of the choices he made in the past. The character's complexity comes to the forefront as he confronts the sacrifices Ratna made for the sake of their family and his art.

Jairaj's character serves as a vehicle through which the play explores themes of gender discrimination, societal expectations, and the price of pursuing one's passion in a conservative society. His passion for dance and his journey, marked by struggles and regrets, make him a central figure in "Dance Like a Man," contributing to the play's exploration of complex human emotions and relationship.

While not the primary target of gender discrimination, Jairaj, as a male Bharatanatyam dancer, challenges the traditional perception that dance is primarily a feminine art form. He faces societal pressure to conform to more conventional masculine roles.

Ratna is one of the central characters who faces gender discrimination. She is a talented Bharatanatyam dancer but is expected to prioritize her roles as a wife and mother over her career in dance. The play highlights the sacrifices and struggles she endures due to societal expectations placed on women. As a female dancer, Ratna's opportunities in the field of classical dance are restricted. She is not considered on the same level as male dancers and is often relegated to supporting roles. This reflects the gender bias in the classical dance world. Ratna has to work harder to gain recognition as a dancer compared to her male counterparts. She faces challenges in establishing herself as a respected artist in a society that values male performers more. Ratna's choices are frequently controlled by the men in her life, whether it's her father or husband, and this lack of autonomy is a manifestation of gender.

Lata represents the younger generation in the play, and her character embodies the generational conflict between traditional values and modern aspirations. She has ambitions and dreams that differ from her parents' expectations, which leads to tension and clashes within the family. Much of the drama in the play revolves around the conflict between Lata and her parents, particularly her mother, Ratna. Lata's desire for freedom and her choices create tension and conflict within the Parents. Lata symbolizes the changing aspirations and values of the younger generation in India. Her character reflects the evolving roles and expectations of women in a modern society.

Lata's character serves as a counterpoint to her parents, providing a contemporary perspective on gender roles, independence, and the pursuit of personal and artistic goals in a changing cultural landscape. Her character adds depth to the exploration of gender and generational themes in the play.

These characters collectively illustrate how gender discrimination and societal expectations affect individuals in different ways, depending on their roles and aspirations. The play delves into their personal struggles and the consequences of these expectations, shedding light on the complexities of gender discrimination in the context of classical Indian dance and family dynamics. A person should be judged based on his or her quality and capability, but not on the basis of gender only. Then the society will improve in true sense. Every individual has got their own purpose and rights and hence they deserve equal respect on earth.

"Dance Like a Man" is a powerful portrayal of the struggles faced by individuals who aspire to break free from the constraints of gender discrimination and societal expectations, particularly in the realm of classical Indian dance. It

remains a significant work in the context of Indian theater for its thought-provoking exploration of these themes.

References

Dattani, Mahesh, 2006. "*Dance Like a Man*", Penguin Random House India.

Chaudhuri, Asha Kothari, 2005, Mahesh Dattani: An Introduction, Foundation Books, New Delhi.

Biswal, Pravasini. Gender Discrimination in Mahesh Duttani's play *Dance Like A Man and Tora -A Critical Analysis. International Journal of English, Literature and Social Sciences (IJELS)* Vol-4, Issue-6, Nov - Dec 2019

https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/ijels.46.64 ISSN: 2456-7620

RIGHT TO MARRIAGE: ROUTINE VIOLENCE OF THE STATE AND EXTENSION OF PATRIARCHAL CONTROL

Dr. Neelam Jain
Faculty of Political Science
Amity University, Haryana

Abstract

The article critically analyses the role of the state in ensuring the right to marriage of couples who defy family wishes or community norms. The findings are based on the textual analysis of judgments of Punjab and Haryana High Court and participant observation of actual High Court proceedings dealing with couples who petition for protection order from the court. Besides, the analysis is based on in-depth interviews of couples and other stakeholders of the state. The study unfolds the routine or more subtle form of violence in the micro practices of legal and judicial apparatus of the state which nullifies or contradicts the legal enablement of progressive laws. Such cases reflect the extension of patriarchal control of the family members or community people in the arena of state institutions. The state emerges as an overall patriarch; 'benevolent' or 'protective' in some instances and 'violent' and 'retributive' in other cases. The 'benevolent' and 'protective' role of state can be understood primarily in the judicial apparatus of the state.

Keywords: *Patriarchy, Marriage, Punjab and Haryana High Court, State .*

Introduction

The understanding of violence of the state in juxtaposition to the violence of community perpetrated against individuals for policing marriages and controlling their sexualities throws light on multiple actors, processes, forms and dimensions of such violence. The article interrogates the role of the state by analyzing micro practices of legal- judicial apparatus of the state in dealing with cases where there is violence or imminent violence against couples or/and their family members for their marriages or intended marriages.

This article is part of findings of her doctoral research titled Community, State and Crimes of 'Honour': A Case Study of Haryana submitted to University of Delhi.

The article is based on the insights derived from survey of couple and the study of legal proceedings and judgments of Punjab and Haryana High Court.

The first section presents a general discussion of the role of the state which is followed by the discussion of the role of the legal apparatus of the state primarily through the judgments of Punjab and Haryana High Court.

Role of the State in Controlling Sexualities of Individuals and Policing Marriages

While analyzing the role of the state in violence against marriages or courtship, scholars have pointed out that the control of sexualities of individuals is as much vital for the existence and sovereign power of the state as that for the family or community. Feminists have highlighted the gendered nature of such control and questioned the assumed neutrality of the state in the sphere which is considered as 'familial' or 'personal'.

The article argues that though state enables individuals to challenge the community norms and assert choice and freedom in marriage through its laws and macro policies, however, the same state nullifies or contradicts such enablement through micro administrative practices. The state emerges as an overall patriarch; *'benevolent'* or *'protective'* in some instances and *'violent'* and *'retributive'* in other cases. The *'benevolent'* and *'protective'* role of state can be discerned primarily in the legal apparatus of the state and operation of state institutions such as the Protection Centers for couples. The executives or judges of State High judiciary routinely impose protective measures for girls overriding the legal requirements. As such, the state assumes the role of the benevolent patriarch on behalf of the family or community members of the girl concerned. Such 'protective' measures adversely affect the legal rights and enabling measures provided by the state to individuals. Besides, the state institutions such as Protection Centers which are meant to provide space to individuals for execution of choice in marriages without endangering the life of couples from the violence of family and community members sometimes turned out to be a place for double victimization of couples, both by the patriarchal state authorities as well as the family or community members. The complicity of the police force in criminalizing choice marriages and protecting perpetrators for violence against couples or/ and their family members throws light on the violent practices of the patriarchal state.

Legal- Judicial Apparatus of the State: Role of the Punjab and Haryana High Court

The role of the legal apparatus of the state as reflected in the everyday or routine practices of Judges in the implementation of the law points to the

contradictions in state positions. Whereas on the one hand, the state laws empower individuals to counter the control of the family and the community members in exercise of choice in their marriage, contrarily the same state nullifies such enablement in its everyday implementation of law.

A study of the judgments of Punjab and Haryana High Court in the cases where couples seek protection from the state, demonstrate how the state overrides the legal requirements to act as a 'benevolent patriarch' by imposing many 'protective' measures on women. Such measures often prove to be counterproductive and end up aggravating the vulnerabilities of couples and circumscribe their legal rights. Women are mostly perceived as emotionally fragile and irrational and thus unable to give consent to their own marriages. At times, upholding the chastity of woman becomes prime concern rather than upholding her legal rights and choice in marriage. Besides, the judiciary itself pronounces its limitation by making a distinction between the legality of marriage and the validity of marriage in a society, and often validity is conceived in terms of approval of male members of family or community. Often family or community members who are against the alliance or marriage of the couple book false criminal charges against the boy/ couple at the instance of support of police. Though, there grown many 'counter criminalization'[i] strategies which can be utilized by the High Court to protect the couple against false criminal charges, the Judges often show reluctance for utilization of such legal strategies. Both the complexity of laws related to marriage and the growing nexus of advocates and agents of various religious institutions led to the further exploitation of the vulnerable situation of couple. These points are discussed in the following.

This section will discuss the routine practices of the state in dealing with such couples who seek protection orders from the High Court of Punjab and Haryana which falls under the inherent power of the state. Section 482 of the Criminal Procedure Code of 1973 deals with the inherent power of the High Court which reads:

> "Nothing in this Code shall be deemed to limit or affect the inherent powers of the High Court to make such orders as may be necessary to give effect to any order under this Code, or to prevent abuse of the process of any court or otherwise secure the ends of justice."[ii]

It is worthy to mention that this is one of the important counter criminalization strategies which ascertains executive action for protection of life and liberty of consenting adults against actual or supposed family and community violence.

Mostly, when a couple leaves their home or place to live together against the wishes of their family and community, the male members of the family who seek to 'retrieve' their daughter, falsely implicate the boy or the couple under various criminal charges in the police station. The lives of such a couple are under constant

threat of a violent attack by the family or community members, and sometimes, even the police who keep chasing them. When a couple approaches the High Court for protection of their lives, either they find themselves being harassed by the muscle men of their community or pursued by the state officials who seek to 'retrieve' the girl and punish her male companion. There are many cases where the petitioners have cited in their petitions that their relatives are waiting outside the High court premises to physically harm or eliminate them.

A study of such cases filed in the High Court of Punjab and Haryana brings into fore various practices of state and couples in this regard. Generally, everyday 5 to 15 couples approach the Court and file petitions under section 482 of Cr PC for directing the state and/or private respondents to provide adequate protection and to ensure their lives and liberty from the family members or other relatives of the petitioner/s. Sometimes, a petition is also made to give direction to quash the false criminal charges against the couples or the boys. For filing such writ petitions, petitioners have to submit affidavits that they are major, and they have already performed marriage and send representation to the state respondents to provide protection. For this, they have to produce evidence in the form of marriage and age certificates and photographs of the performance of their marriage.

The routine practice of the court shows that only if the concerned Judge is satisfied that the proof of age and marriage certificate provided by the petitioners are correct and depict the valid legal marriage between the petitioners, only then the court gives direction to the state respondents. Such Court orders specifically mention that such protection orders do not validate the legality of marriage between the petitioners. There is ambiguity regarding the evidence for proof of age of the couple even though the ascertaining of the age of adult status of the couple is very crucial from the legal point of view. It is observed in the judgments that various certificates such as the High School Leaving Certificate, Middle Class Examination Certificate, Matriculation Certificate, 5th Standard Certificate, PAN card, Ration Card, Driving License, Aadhar Card, UID certificate or the Birth Certificate etc. have been accepted as valid proof of age depending upon the individual judges. Such judicial flexibility mostly works against the girls in cases where family members of the couple insist upon the minor status of the girl against the claim of adult status of the girl made by the couple themselves.

Another routine practice of some of the Hon'ble Judges of Punjab and Haryana High Court is that they ask the male petitioner to prove his bonafide by depositing money ranging from 1 lakh to 4 lakh in the form of FDR in favour of the female petitioner/ his wife. Such demands are made even when the judges are satisfied about the adult status of the couple for conducting a valid marriage under the law. Initially, judicial order to deposit 50,000 rupees within 2-10 days are pronounced and only when the male petitioner submits the photocopy of FDR of the said amount, then another order is made which directs the state respondents to

protect the couple. In such judicial orders, instructions for submission of photocopy of FDR of pending money to be paid within three to six months are issued to the male petitioners.

Even though there is no legal requirement for submission of such amount, it seemed to have become a rule rather than exception in the routine practice of the few Hon'ble Judges of Punjab & Haryana High Court.

It is noteworthy that while acting as a 'benevolent patriarch' on behalf of the family or community members of the girl concerned, the legal apparatus of the state pushes the couple into a precarious situation especially because most such couples who seek protection against their own family members have already been deprived of any economic support and for security of their lives they are forced to move to different places and jobs.

In this context, the work of Iris Marion Young on conceptualizing the gendered nature of 'security state' and the 'logic of masculinist protection' is very relevant. Marion argues that 'masculinity' cannot be interpreted in singular fashion and provides a more nuanced understanding of masculinity than the prevalent understanding of masculinity as being 'dominative'. She expands the understanding of 'masculine' power to another benign or benevolent form of 'masculinity' where men act as 'protector' of women. This masculine role of 'protector' is based on the presumption of an evil 'other' and such men are constantly vigilant of securing their women from the aggressive men that are outside. Central to the logic of 'masculinist protection' is the subordinate position and dependence of those who are in the protected position. In return for such male protection, the woman concedes to be loyal and obedient to the decisions of protectors and as such loses autonomy in decision making and questioning the decision of her male protectors (Young, 2003, pp. 1-25).

In the context of the role of the state judiciary in imposing such protective measures for women, we can argue that state officials in the name of protecting the financial security of women, presumes the masculine role of protector of women who punishes her male companion for divesting the custodial power of family or community members of women. For the women concerned, they are deprived of any right to question such decisions of judges which are apparently made for their own security or protection.

The deplorable effect of imposition of such 'protective' measures can be discerned from various cases. For example, in the case of *Nancy Devi & Another vs. State of Haryana and Others* (CRM-M 28681-2014), mother of the boy had to come to the rescue of her son by having execute to the sale deed of her residential house before the Court on behalf of her son to prove his bonafides.

The patriarchal role of the state officials can be discerned from observations made in various judgments where women are depicted as emotionally fragile, irrational and always prone to enticement by young. It is routinely observed that

judges often mix up the cases of choice marriages involving the consent of an adult girl with that of the poor, victimized girls who are enticed and then forced into flesh trade.

In the case of *Amandeep Kaur and Another vs. State of Punjab and others*[iii], it was observed that the lack of bonafide intention of the boy (petitioner no 2) showed that it was a case where the girl (petitioner no 1) had been enticed into performing the alleged marriage.

Besides, the Court made following observations to substantiate its conviction, which specially present the image of an innocent, emotionally fragile and vulnerable woman who was prone to be enticed into the intrigues of the evil or 'masked' men outside.

> *"This Court cannot lose sight of the fact that we are living in a society where some people wear masks and are good at hiding things. Matrimonial life needs transparency, when someone can be trusted, otherwise it may lead to complete vulnerability. It is common that trust is destroyed in relationships in a while. The masked man specifically targets vulnerable girls in full bloom who have difficult background or are emotionally fragile. Such girls are enticed and made to believe that they will have wonderful married life and they are special to the masked man. It has become an epidemic. The unfortunate teenaged female children and girls in full bloom are being sold in various parts of the country and put to unbearable miseries. They are shockingly and brutally treated and confined in complete seclusion. They unwillingly surrender themselves to obnoxious way of life. This Court has come across the cases where some of the girls, who had initially solemnized run-away marriages, had thereafter returned to their parents having been robbed of the chastity. When they enter into love marriage, they imagine having attained heavenly bliss with their relationship. They believe that nothing adverse will come between them. They dream the married life as embroidered with golden offers given to each other. When these innocent girls are caught in a web of lies and intrigues of the masked man, then the truth of life dawns on them. Then the innocent girl discovers the most dangerous enemy which continues to live inside her, then she realizes that the most loyal and love-heart has betrayed her, and when such a shocking news from the love-heart is received, it is very dreadful."*

Such cases illustrate the prevailing contradictions in the state law on the one hand and its judicial interpretation or micro practices on the other. For ascertaining the legality of marriage, a woman's consent is necessary to record, however, the

state judiciary seemed to have pronounced the prevalent patriarchal perception that underestimates the ability of women to give consent in such matters. Often, there is seen that consensual marriage of a couple is illustrated as an act of forceful flesh trade of poor and victimized girls in the judicial constructions. The judicial pronouncement echoes the premium on maintaining sexual purity and chastity of women by the patriarchal family and community. Acting on behalf of their male guardian, the state officials seek to protect the chastity of women without letting it '*robbed*' by the *'masked men'*. For providing such assumed protection, state even dismisses the protection plea made by woman herself and the legality of her marriage of choice.

Moreover, the complexities or inherent ambiguities of laws also work for aggravating the vulnerability and chances of exploitation of the couple who seek to solemnize their marriage under the existing laws relating to marriage. The procedures for solemnization of marriage as laid down in the existing *Hindu Marriage Act 1955* and *Special Marriage Act 1954* seems to have led to the growth of a huge 'marriage industry'. As per the *Hindu Marriage Act*, one has to perform certain ceremonies and customary rites for claiming legality of their marriage as mentioned in the Section 7 of the *Hindu Marriage Act, 1955:* "Ceremonies for a Hindu Marriage— (1) A Hindu marriage may be solemnized in accordance with the customary rites and ceremonies of either party thereto. (2) Where such rites and ceremonies include the *saptapadi* (that is, the taking of seven steps by the bridegroom and the bride jointly before the sacred fire), the marriage becomes complete and binding when the seventh step is taken."

Most of the couples do not opt for *the Special Marriage Act 1954*, which provides for secular marriages between consenting adults is often not opted by the couples who seek to perform their marriage against the wishes of family or community that is because under this Act, 30 days statutory notice is required before solemnization and registration of marriage. It is a routine practice of the state that the names of couples who intend to perform their marriage under this Act are displayed on the Public notice board of the Marriage Registrar's offices. Besides, the couples need to be verified by the police in their concerned residential addresses. Such practices of the solemnization of marriage are misused by leaders of many communal organizations or other persons who inform the family members of the couple about their imminent marriage and as such creates vulnerable situation for them even putting their lives in danger. Even though, the District and the Sessions Judges in Punjab and Haryana and UT Chandigarh were empowered for grant of protection to couples, Punjab and Haryana High Court is flooded with petitions seeking such protection of the lives and liberty of couples. This is mainly because couples are often misguided by advocates that marriages are being registered in the High court. This is an integral part of marriage industry whereby there grown a nexus between advocates and priests of many temples or religious institutions where couples have to pay large amount for getting their marriage done hastily

and also by registering petitions for protection from the Court. The legal requirement of solemnization of marriage for getting protection as reflected in the routine practices of the state has created a situation where a couple is double victimized.

In this context, it is also important to cite positive judgments such as judgment of Punjab and Haryana High Court in the Pradeep Kumar's case (2008 (3) RCR (Criminal), 376-391) where the Court, fixed the accountability of the state in protecting the couples from violence against them. It clearly instructed that "whenever any intimation regarding threat of lives of young couple is received by the SSP/SP of the concerned district, s/he will look into the matter and issue necessary directions to maintain a record of the said intimation under chapter 21 of the Punjab Police Rules." Besides, necessary steps should be taken by the officials of the concerned police station and the family members of the couple should be contacted and the various facts of the matter should be determined. In cases where the family members of the girls file criminal charges against the boy or the couple, arrest should be deferred till the recording of a prejudicial statement by the concerned girl. The girls who have attained the majority should not be handed over to their parents against her consent. Besides, police officials were asked to initiate action in accordance with law when there is threat to lives of the couple or breach of peace at the hands of family or community members of the couple.

Study of various judgments make it clear that the judges often make a distinction between the legality of the marriage and validity of the marriage in the wider society. Approval of the family members of the girl is considered very important for ascertaining the validity of marriage. Besides, the couples who leave their family or community for marriage are often perceived as having married merely for fulfilling their physical desire in contrast to the moral commitment of that couple who marries for fulfilling the wishes of their family members.

Thus, the above discussion reveals the extension of patriarchal control in the routine practices of the state which impinge on the right to marriage of choice enabled by the progressive laws of the state. However, we cannot deny the fact that from time to time there are progressive judicial pronouncements which have reestablished the importance of legal rights of couples.

Notes

[i]   Baxi, P & et al. (2006). Habeas Corpus in the realm of love: Litigating marriage of choice in India. *The Australian Feminist Journal*, 25, 59-78. The authors illustrate how the state law is used for both 'criminalization' and 'counter criminalization' of choice marriages. Parents or community members seeking to retrieve their daughters register criminal complaints, sometimes they forge the age of a daughter to present her as a minor or claim a prior marriage to suggest bigamy and most popularly charge her partner with kidnapping and statutory rape. Interestingly, state law is also used to counter the criminalization of choice marriages; and the "appeals range from petitions to quash FIR, challenges to illegal detention and plea for personal liberty under the writ of habeas corpus and filing collusive suits for the restoration of conjugal rights (Baxi. 2006, p. 70).

[ii]   The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, p. 254. Retrieved from http://www.legalindia.com/inherent-powers-ofthe-high-court-under-section-482-of-crpc/.

[iii] Retrieved fromhttps://www.casemine.com/judgement/in/58117e742713e1794788f106

PATRIARCHY AND MASCULINE CONSTRUCTION: WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF NATIONALITY IN INDIA: THE POLITICS OF GENDER AND SYMBOLISM

Shanti Priya Gogoi
Assistant Professor
Department of Political Science, Bapujee College

Abstract

Nationalism as a concept is evolutionary, has multiple meanings, philosophies built around it with varied purposes and contentions. This paper is an analytical overview of how Nationalism is built around patriarchy and masculine projections and it is primarily constructed in a way that reinforces hierarchy and power politics in which women have been constantly narrowed down to symbolic metaphors and sexual norms. The paper recognizes the masculine nature of Indian nationalism which is being hegemonized by Indian Cinema Post-Independence. The paper takes a feminist perspective to look into the gendered construction of Nationalism and Indian women being used as sites of symbols and body politics.

Keywords: *Nationalism, Patriarchy, Masculinity, Indian Cinema, Symbolic Metaphors.*

"Patriarchy by definition is a system of relationships, beliefs and values embedded in political, social and economic systems that structure gender inequality between men and women". In this system of beliefs "feminine" attributes are considered weak and vulnerable and 'masculine attributes are considered strong and privileged. However, women possessing masculine attributes are not considered to be privileged. They are stereotyped as unusual, non feminine and somehow don't fit into the gender box constructed by the patriarchal society.

Subordination of women in our societies has been rampant throughout history and civilizations. Subordination in terms of discrimination, humiliation, oppression, control of life, violence; both physical and mental, exploitations: political, economic social and cultural, harassment; domestic and workplace, the list doesn't seem to end.

Patriarchy literally means the rule of the father in a male-dominated family. The underlying social construct is that the men are superior to women and hence

fit to run the family and then the society. Women are pushed back to the roles of child bearers, nurturers and caregivers who merely are subjects in this male driven kingship. The real decision makers are the men who decide every aspect of the household, every aspect of the life of the women in that house hold and eventually and naturally (?) decision makers in society, polity, economy. Even the cultural practices of the society are deep rooted in the convenient practices of Men.

Patriarchy is a system of unequal and hierarchical power relation where Man systematically and structurally controls reproduction of women and even their sexual appetite. It imposes masculinity over femininity which strengthens this unequal power setup between Man and Women. Feminism is an active response of the women community (and the communities that expose and resists patriarchy) against oppression, subordination, control of material and ideological aspects of women. This response or active consciousness is not to establish a reverse patriarchy or matriarchy for that matter but to establish a society based on equal rights for both or simply just to establish

EQUALITY

Struggling for equality in the society, especially for women, has not been a fairy tale. The history of struggle for equality is a history of violence, social struggle and articulated by relapse and disaster. Nationalism is just another socio-political force where women have participated, contributed and yet never been equally represented or projected as it is. Women have been subjected to humiliation in the context of nationalism by projecting them as weak and vulnerable who needs protection to maintain honor and humility.

Nationalism: the gendered roles

Nationalism is an idea, a movement that promotes the interests of a particular nation, often identified by a shared ethnicity, language, religion, culture or set of social values. However, it's very hard to define it univocally for all the nations and their spirits. Some argue that Nationalism is what nationalists make of it. However, this statement is an evasion and does not tend to the realities of discriminative and symbolic representation of women.

Nationalism, as against some might argue, is far from dead. It has become the most powerful force in contemporary political life. The ongoing Russia Ukraine War and more recently the Israel and Palestine war scream nationalism in its own shape and form. The Indian nationalism is stronger and louder than ever. The current government has greatly focused on instilling Mera Desh Mera

Samman (My country, my pride) values into the mind-set of every Indian, especially the younger generations. For instance, the recent successful Moon Mission, Chandrayan 3, was no doubt an attempt at the biggest scientific achievement of the country.

But it was equally a matter of national sentiment, national pride and a stamp of face value of Indian Nationalism at the international stage. The fact that the government issued order to live telecast the rocket landing in all the educational institutions, was a subtle way to add another step up in the staircase of Nationalism.

Women experience discourses of nationality and citizenship very differently than Man. The relationship is unequal. This is evident from the fact that throughout history Man has always been seen as fit to defend the nation, fight the wars and decide the fate of humanity. However, women have a different role to play. They are the biological production objects meant to reproduce, nurture and care. Men wage wars and the women pay for it. Women are forced to separation, deprivation, sexual violence because they are rendered unprotected, forced to take unfamiliar roles to as a means of livelihood for survival. During World War II more than two hundred thousand

Japanese Women were forced to sexual slavery. They were labeled as "Comfort Women'. They were kept in brutal conditions and repeatedly raped for months and years. Those Women who resisted were tortured, beaten and even burnt with cigarettes. This is just one example of the fact that women are in fact labeled, seen and used as material symbols throughout history.

A Feminist Perspective of Nationalism

The expressions of Nationalism in academic discourse can be found in the writings of Benedict Anderson, Karl Deutch, Eric Hobsbawn, Anthony D. Smith, and Ernest Gellner. Their works have extensively reflected on the various processes and the dynamics of nationalism. They have recorded the historical moments of the evolution of nationalism. Anderson argues that "Nationalism is a story of national origins that creates imagined community amongst the citizens of the modern state". Eric Hobsbawn defines Nationalism as "Political and Ideological Construction". However, these works have raised concerns to the feminist readers for overlooking the gender reductionist narratives of the nationalist perspectives. There is no analysis of the politics of Gendered Nationalism and the nature of the relationship between patriarchy and nationalist politics. The feminist scholars have asserted that these scholars on Nationalism have failed to include sex and gender in the visions of nation making.

The symbolic place of gender in the construction of Nationalism did not necessarily secured a place for women in effective political power. They were simply symbolized as the mother of the nation which implied their reproductive duty to produce and raise able bodied sons for the protection of the nation. This conceptualization has restrained women from participating in active and meaningful decision making in politics. The feminists argue that the entire discourse of nationalism is masculine and the relationship of women to the nation has been consciously domesticated.

A strand of third world Feminists focuses on how the masculine approach to Nationalism has affected the feminist's issues at the international level. The International Politics and policy making tends to primarily focus on the external factors overlooking the issues of internal patriarchal oppression that goes hand in hand. The 'comfort women' during Japanese colonial era for instance, the government tried to conceal the issue by focusing on the aftermath war politics. The sexual violence against thousands of women on both sides during the partition of India has a tendency to get overlooked and lost among the politics of boundaries.

Since Nationalism as it is has created more issues for Women and with the problematic relationship between Nationalist and Feminist discourses, it might seem fair to leave nationalism out of the bargain. However, that doesn't seem to be the case. Nationalism is a "wounded pride" for both Man and Women. The Third World Nations that struggled to have their self-determination, nationalism has always been the mode of resistance. It has become cultural, rather than being political. It is one common point of streak where everyone irrespective of their race, religion and culture connect with. Nationalism has always been the answer to systemic oppression, genocide, exploitation from foreign intruders and agencies. The basic goal is independence and self-determination of the Nation. Consciously or not, the feminist issues are reserved for later to attain the common goal.

The context of Indian Nationalism

Nationalism by itself is very evolutionary in nature and has an array of meanings, contexts, intentions, contentions and definitions revolving around the concept. The element of nationalism varies from person to person, nation to nation and its experience is different for both the genders. There is an inherent sexism in the relationship of women and nationalism in India. Mostly it's symbolic and feminine in nature. Nationalism is an artificial construction and in India the construction basically revolves around the bodily images or metaphors of women which is in a constant state of fear from external intrusion. The need for constant protection of women by a masculine authority and force both in domestic and public life is reflectively portrayed in the context of the Nation.

The gendered idea of Indian Nationalism is stemmed from the decades of colonial torture and the desperate need to have freedom and protect it any cost. The discourses on a woman's materialism have been largely incorporated to establish a wider view of nationalism to a post-independence audience. This has been largely seen via the lens of Indian Cinema which with time became hegemonic in terms of synonymously establishing the idea of Mother and Nation and vice versa. The actors who portrayed the role of a Hero saving Bharat Mata and bringing honour to the nation or the role of saving a Women from losing her sexual honour to dacoits were equally praised and Hero worshipped by the audience.

The sentiment for the "Bharat Mata" that has only grown stronger with time had been consciously ruptured into the minds of Indian people by the Nationalist

leaders and the freedom fighters by linking the honor of the Nation to that of women's body and sexuality which needed to be defended by her Sons. These norms or politics of image did set boundaries regarding the moral values of women and established a Hegemonic masculinity in the Indian society and in the discourses of Nationalism.

To understand the nationalist aspect of Indian women, one needs to consider them first as colonized women. According to Partha Chatterjee Nationalism in India was not simply about a Political struggle for power, it was a matter of political independence of the nation to virtually every aspect of the material and spiritual life of the people. The colonized people of India, especially the women, the world (foreigners, out siders, intruders) was viewed as being oppressive, dominating and eating up on the material and non-material aspects of their lives as well as the nation. The psychology of these women were naturally becoming defensive. They were constantly fed upon the idea of needing protection for homer and preservation. They were pushed into the corner as the protected ones and the male counterparts were thrusted (with pride) as the protectors. The psychology of having a mother as the most valuable property in one's life was popularly projeted by Hindi Cinema dialogue "mere pass bungla hein, gari hein peisa hein, tumhare paas kya hein?

To which the reply was "mere paas Maahein". This dialogue validated the symbolism of a women as the ultimate sentiment in the hearts and minds of Indian people.

Cynthia Enloe in her work "Bananas, Beaches and Bases", made an observation that Nationalism is typically a masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope. The Indian Nationalism basically is a sprouted from the characterization of the Male freedom fighters who were epitome of masculinity, bravery, fierce, who weren't afraid to take a bullet for their Land and freedom. The handful of women freedom fighters might not have given the same political mileau but they were definitely given a symbolic place as the mothers and sisters of the nation. Women's Political participation and women movements were part of and yet separate from the mainstream nationalist movements. It was as if these movements and participations were almost a mercy. In the Nationalist discourse of India, Women has definitely become the imagined community, where their bodies are projected as the sites of nationalist politics and emotions.

The symbolism of the nation as Mother India was widely accepted not only by the Hindus, where women as female deities and mother goddess were common, but also by the non-Hindus because of the revolutionary potential of the projection. The idea of a new Indian women was constructed and modified consciously by the political nationalists to appeal to the modern ideas of equality and liberalism. It was also done to cater to the needs of the changing requirements of the nationalism.

Conclusion

Therefore, it's safe to assume that one can draw links between gender and nationalism and between gender and colonialism to discuss the relationship and experience of women and Nationalism in India. The attempts of the nationalist leaders to project women as symbols is misleading as it paints a homogenous and uniform category of Indian women across the country. Women have been misrepresented in the name of national symbols and emoticons. They have been deprived from expressing their varying socio-political consciousness in terms of participation in the national movements and their varied experiences in the post-independence era. The Indian historians have worked out a perfect picture of the nationalist movement which became a tale to tell and a story that inspires the future masculine role models. The women? Well, we are still trying to find a meaningful place without much of the symbolic representation.

References

Beechey, V. (1979). On patriarchy. *Feminist Review,* 3(1), 66-82.

Chatterjee, P. (1989). Colonialism, nationalism, and colonialized women: The contest in India. *American ethnologist,* 16(4), 622-633.

Faulks, K. (2013). *Citizenship*. Routledge, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315008608, ISBN 9781315008608; 1st Ed., 2000

Herr, R. S. (2003). The possibility of nationalist feminism. *Hypatia*, 18(3), 135-160.

Hall, C. (1993). Gender, Nationalisms and National Identities: Bellagio Symposium, July 1992. *Feminist Review*, 44(1), 97-103.

Piketty, T. (2022). *A brief history of equality*. Harvard University Press.

Thapar, S. (1993). Women as activists; women as symbols: A study of the Indian nationalist movement. *Feminist Review*, 44(1), 81-96.

GENDER, SOCIETY AND WOMEN IN INDIA: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Mr. Debajit Boruah
Assistant Professor
ICFAI University, Sikkim

Abstract

Women play an important role as men in nation-building. However, women's status has not grown to the level as compared to men in Indian society. Women in Indian society have come a long way and proved that she is capable of doing anything and having equal partnership in the growth and prosperity of the nation.Therefore, this studydelves into the nuanced connections among gender dynamics, social structures and the experiences of women in India. The study also examines how gendered ideology leads to women's subjugation within Indian social context. The study uses Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) as a theoretical framework to explain gender and society in India.

***Keywords:** Feminist, Gender, Patriarchy and status.*

Introduction

Gender study is characterised primarily by its social, political and cultural stance that attempts to advance the social role of women in society. Gender study also highlights the political relationship between the sexes, the supremacy of men and the subjection of women in most. Gender study analyses the institutions, processes and practices through which women have been subordinated to men and explores the most appropriate and effective ways to challenge this subordination. Gender study has risen as a counter-attack against the socially, politically, economically and culturally determined performances of femininity. It is an interdisciplinary study focusing on the social construction of identity and gender-based representation. Gender study is undeniably a vast area that talks about the difference between men and women based on sexual differences. Gender studies involve studying both men and women and examining their roles in a particular society.

Numerous ideologies and movements have developed different viewpoints on gender studies over the years. Former feminist critics such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone de Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf had criticised the notion of biased suppositions. Mary Wollstonecraft, in her work "A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792)", argues that women should be entitled to the same rights and privileges as men because they are 'human beings' and Simone de Beauvoir said that masculine is represented as the positive or the norm, while the feminine is portrayed as 'other'. Such 'otherness' fundamentally limits women's freedom and prevents them from expressing their full humanity. Following their footsteps, contemporary feminist critics from different countries have been carrying their traditions in modern days. They have done plenty of research works on sexuality and gender and opposed the ongoing implications on the feminine body.

In a society, every individual can utilize his or her own thoughts and ideas, which can be considered as the basic human right of an individual. However, it is ironic that, in reality, noteveryone can express his/her ideas. In the context of women, they are referred to as the most vulnerable sections of society and often being sidelined from taking any vital decision of their own. Most of society's women remain suppressed by their husbands' in-laws. They spend most of their time in household chores and remain politically powerless, economically dependent throughout life and viewed as inferior in the man-dominated society.

While defining women's empowerment, Mahatma Gandhi described it as a situation "when women, whom we call abala become sabala, all those who are helpless will become powerful" (Cited in Patel, 2008). It is a fact that the status of women in India is not growing up to the level in terms of their position in decision-making bodies. Participation of women is low not only in the elected bodies but also in administrative posts. Most of the time, the husband believes that the women are their private property. In his book "The Origin of Family, Private Property and State", Friedrich Engels clearly mentions how the private property's origin leads to the subordination of the wife to the husband. Hence, it is a widespread belief that the husband owns his wife; the wife is reduced to the status of an enslaved person, and therefore, he can naturally use her for his sexual pleasure, even if it requires the use of force. The partner also knows that the wife will not complain; even if she does, it will remain unattended. Therefore, he can commit rape without any fear and also without realizing the gravity of his act many times. The societal patriarchy affects the psychology of the husband in such a way that in order to prove or revitalize his 'manhood', he subjugates his wife by exploiting her in the sexual domain.

In Indian society, women's existence is nearly recognised to the extent of helping the husband and running the family, such as doing household activities, taking care of everyone and looking after and bringing up their children. Whenever family problems take place, women's voices are rarely considered as important, and most of the time, their opinions are not considered or not counted by terming

the voice as that of women. The majority of the women are illiterate, not politically conscious due to lake of information and political awareness and they make their choice based on suggestions from male members of the family. The women groups in the village areas live in social isolation. In recent years, some developments in their socio-political activities have been observed positively, but still, they are lacking behind compared to man (Arunachalam, 2011). One of the main reasons for their sociopolitical backwardness is the low level of literacy, as a result of which most of them are dependent on their respective husbands and their families and also, women are not aware of government policies that are actually taken for them. So, most of the benefits are enjoyed by only those women who are literate.

In the patriarchal system of family structure, after marriage, the women are required to adopt the title of their husband. Except for working to fulfil their household needs, the women cannot exercise any authority in any aspect of their social life, and they occupy a status inferior to their male counterparts. They have no power to exercise their views in society; the women must remain submissive and dependent upon the male. Conversation between male and female members within the family is infrequent. Even their husband usually addresses his wife by name; instead, he addresses her by saying 'oi' and as the mother of "x" or "y",. It reflects the low socio-political status of women in Indian society. It can be remarked that a single woman, no matter how productive and independent, is always given inferior status at home and in society. Thus, her status in her own house is reduced to the minimum. She loses her self-confidence and dignity. Thus, she also loses the opportunities for a self-esteemed and self-sufficient life.

Policy suggestions

The government has taken several initiatives for the upliftment of the status of women in selective areas. Due to these initiatives, many women have benefited but most of the women's problems are not fulfilled yet. In light of the above study, the following specific suggestions can be made for the upliftment of the socio-political status of women through their effective participation.

➢ To identify the poorest and most oppressed women of selected geo-political or rural areas and provide training activities for women who are gender aware and politically conscious.

➢ There is a need to facilitate the formation of women's NGOs and civil societies to play important roles in the social transformation and progress processes and to form a strong and collective organisation through which individual and collective problems are identified and prioritised.

➢ Men's friendliness, domestic responsibilities, etc., are significant constraints in women's empowerment. Therefore, political awareness programs should be made for women to understand their rights and benefits.

- There is a need for regular orientation programs and training programs that will help to increase their political and management skill in society.
- Sharing cooperation by both women and men would result in better designing and implementing activities in Panchayat. Gender discrimination should be minimised and avoided.
- Media should play a vital role in this sense, as their responsibility lies in projecting women's empowerment from the proper perspective.
- Women's bodies should pressurise political parties to incorporate this value clearly and categorically in their ideology and their action programmers.
- To arrange regular meetings of local health management and advisory boards. The government should provide surgeons, medicines, and nursing in the village for women.
- Patriarchy society should change their mentality about women.

The gender gap is not a women's issue only; it is a social issue, and hence, all the members of society should be careful of it. There are still many people who have to change their mentality about women. In India, women have got equal legal rights and rights to vote from right after independent of India from the British colonial rule.Nevertheless, why are we still talking about the development of women's status and women's empowerment? Why not men's status? It can be seen man has mainly three monopolies: muscle power, money and mobility. Man has muscle power, so man starts going outside and starts to earn money, but women are not. Men have mobility power, so they go outside, but women are not allowed outside their families. Because of these three monopolies, man becomes superior day by day in our society, and women become dependent for the same. Though the government provides free elementary education, which is an effective tool to empower men and women and create more economic opportunities, still a gap exists between men and women in Indian social context.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it is cleared that Indian women have come a long way and proved that she is capable of doing anything and equal partner in the growth and prosperity of the nation. Women are one of the pillars of society, and it would be difficult to imagine a society without the presence of women. Now, it is high time to understand the power of women. Even our judiciary and legislature have also accepted the fact that women are one of the most critical elements of society and their exploitation would not be accepted at any cost. There is one saying that behind every successful man, there is a woman. This saying proves that men and women are both necessary elements of society. Women play different roles in their life, which is not an easy task. She acts as a daughter, wife, sister and mother at different stages of life. Therefore, we must give them due care and

respect, and understand their efforts towards the welfare of society at large. The development of a nation is linked with the development of women in a society. It is the obligation and the duty of the state and the government to ensure that women enjoy their rights and are treated equally to men.

Reference

Arunachalam, P (2011).*Economic Impact of Political Empowerment of Women in India*. New Delhi: Global Research Publication.

Engels, Friedrich (1884).*The Origin of Family, Private Property and State*. U.K., Penguin Classics.

Judith Butler (2016). *Gender Trouble*. New York: Rutledge Classics.

Mary Wollstonecraft (1792). *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Cambridge University Press.

Menon, Nivedita (2001), *Gender and Politics in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Patel, Vibhuti (2008), *Gandhi and Empowerment of Women*. New Delhi: Sage Publication.

Simone de Beauvoir (1949). *The Second Sex*. Penguin Books.

ISSUES OF PATRIARCHAL DOMINANCE AND GENDER STEREOTYPING IN INDIAN CONTEXT: A SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECT

Gitanjali Dutta
Research Scholar
Department of Education, Gauhati University

Abstract

*Authority exercised by the male head of the family compels men, women and non-binaries/the third gender under constant scrutiny of fabricated norms. Gender as a social construct includes norms, behaviour and roles associated with being a male or a female. Gender roles have been institutionalized and rules are imposed upon individual behaviour. Likewise, in the Indian society too, each individual is expected to conform to their specified roles. The onset of inequality is domination where the powerful exhibits control over the subordinates and those identified as marginalized. Patriarchal dominance presupposes the superiority of male over female by foregrounding women's subordination to men in diverse spheres- society, culture, education, public discourses etc. Gender inequality refers to health, education, inequalities related to legal matters impacting a nation's sex ratio, educational attainment, economic conditions etc. It is a multifaceted issue affecting each gender equally. Although the Constitution of India grants equal rights for men and women, disparities still persist. Gender discrimination of men even include the workplace. Discrimination of women centers on career development, dowry, adultery and other such discriminatory practices taking place at an alarming rate. Domination isn't only the explicit direction given to the subordinates but also they are manipulated to comply and perform the acts as desired. The society is viewed as a set of power foci with individuals and groups involved in exposing the social reality. (Rao, 2003). **United Nations Development Program (UNDP)** has published the Gender Inequality Index and ranked India at 132 out of 148 countries. The socio-cultural construct of Indian society adopts the patrilineal practices with a strong preference for the male child over the female. The concept of social power is reflected within the web of customs, the positions of people in the society and their relation to each other. (Kumar, 2001). Female infanticide, fetal sex determination,*

sex-selective abortion reflects the adverse effects of domination. Caste too is a mode of implementing social power and dominance. While the upper castes gain supremacy, the lower castes are subjected to Karma.

This paper highlights the multifarious forms of gender inequality prevailing in the present Indian society related to- culture, racism, casteism, religious dominance, discrimination in inheritance of paternal property, occupational inequality, professional barriers, dominance over the marginalized etc. The paper too extends achievable suggestions to subdue the inequalities aiming towards a just, empowered and progressive society.

Keywords: *patriarchy, dominance, gender, stereotype, Indian society, Indian culture, caste, race, religion, marginalized section.*

Introduction

Gender is a part of a larger social context. It is a social construct which includes norms, behaviour, roles associated with being a male or a female. Gender roles have been institutionalized and the rules are imposed upon individual behaviour. Each individual is expected to exhibit the roles pertaining to a particular society. The third gender is classified as the one dismantling the binaries of male or female. The onset of inequality is domination where the powerful exhibits control over the subordinates and those identified as marginalized.

Patriarchal dominance presupposes the superiority of male over female by upholding women's subordination to men in diverse spheres of life- society, culture, racism, casteism, religious dominance, discrimination in inheritance of paternal property, occupational inequality, professional barriers, dominance over the marginalized etc. It restricts women's choices ingrained in political and public discourses, local, global economies etc. Men made their presence felt and are often at the forefront whereas women are relegated to the backdrop. If a female takes work home, she is considered as a workaholic unlike a male who is appreciated as hardworking. Women are conditioned to be feminine, tender, polite, obedient, epitome of sacrifice, caring, nurture etc. whereas males are identified with coarseness, strength, valour, practical, independence, leadership, assertiveness etc. If someone tries to dismantle the binaries of the set norms, it is criticized as taboo.

Review of Related Literature

- Kasturi, L. (1992) in the study "Development, Patriarchy and Politics: Indian Women in the Political Process, 1947-1992" stated that state policies affect women be it rural and urban residences, occupational and gender role diversities across caste, class and community. It evades women's economic

and political participation as equal partners, decision makers and agents of national development. Indian women intended to be active participants in directions of their own choice. Challenging the patriarchal social structure was the central goal. The increase in brutality and force are related to consumerism, religious revivalism and strengthening of feudal, sexist and patriarchal values in the society. Women are portrayed either as powerless commodities or parasitical consumers. Such stereotypes have been creating a wide dispersal of antiwomen values leaving them in a state of threat.

- Chakravarty, S. (2013) in the study, "Violence Against Women with Disability in Mumbai, India: A Qualitative Study" stated that women with disability faced violence in the form of restricted mobility, forced marriages, lack of autonomy etc. 15 women with disability were interviewed, 12 with visual impairment, 2 with locomotor and 1 with both. Women felt isolated and schooling disrupted due to lack of medical treatment. Few struggled to gain admission to regular schools. Few of them reported physical and verbal abuse at home and school. 3 respondents reported contemplating suicide. Verbal and physical sexual harassment by strangers occurred in public spaces, trains, buses etc.

- Khurana, N. (2018) in the study, "Evaluating the Evolution of Patriarchy in India and West" highlighted the contribution of self-narratives in the study of patriarchal institutions. An attempt was made to find out the extent how these identities are made viable at various sites of culture as cinema, arts and literature. 32% of the female respondents thought that eve-teasing was a way to display masculinity. The documentaries deconstruct the hierarchy of violence against women in rural India.

  Plays like 'Utsav raised a new voice towards women's movement, 'Lazza' challenges social structures and illiteracy. Autonomy over one's body is a basic right and men seldom realize it.

- Pandian, L. (2020) in the study "Patriarchy and Beauty: The Power over Indian Women" analyzed the connection of body image and skin tone to the analysis of power and status. An attempt has also been made to how women start to objectify themselves to wield culture and economic power in their field. Feminity is viewed as an object to be disciplined by patriarchal power structure. Womanhood and ability to child bearing are celebrated and worshipped yet prohibited from entering the temple during her menstrual cycle. The technology of bio power encourages to maintain her distinctive quality but she becomes a disciplined body. Kumar, T. (2021) in the study "The Culture of Patriarchy, Gender Bias and Class Discrimination in Mahesh Dattani's *Tara*" stated that the play emphasizes social issues as gender inequality, suffering, depression experienced by both men and women in equal measure. It aims to discuss gender issues and women's role in patriarchal societies in addition to exploring class discrimination.

● Kumar, T. (2021) in the study "The Culture of Patriarchy, Gender Bias and Class Discrimination in Mahesh Dattani's *Tara*" stated that the play emphasizes social issues as gender inequality, suffering, depression experienced by both men and women in equal measure. It aims to discuss gender issues and women's role in patriarchal societies in addition to exploring class discrimination. It is the great irony that women play an important role in supporting discrimination with women. A girl is considered a burden on parents financially, emotionally and socially which leads to the murder of a girl child. Dattani has successfully negotiated with the question of gender, disability, family and self-identity. A bitter reality is presented without moral instruction by touching various themes with a sensitive heart. The vicious portrayal of women in the play is the result of identity crisis in the society as class conflict.

Rationale of the study-

Patriarchy as a system of relationships, values, beliefs in political, social, economic systems structures gender inequality between male/female/non-binaries. Feminine attributes are subdued unlike masculine attributes are privileged. Gender roles are imposed upon individual behaviour compelling each one of them to comply and perform the acts as desirable in a society. Women are conditioned as tender, docile, nurture, an epitome of sacrifice, endowed with emotions etc. whereas men are conditioned as a symbol of valour, coarseness, independence, autonomy etc. As the set norms are transgressed, an individual is brought under scrutiny and stigmatized. An attempt is made to foreground the issues of dominance and gender inequality in India pertaining to its socio-cultural aspect. The study too extends achievable suggestions to subdue the inequalities aiming towards a just, empowered and progressive society.

Issues of Patriarchal dominance and gender stereotyping in India from sociocultural perspective

A.Cultural dominance- The cultural construct of Indian society adopts the patrilineal practices with a strong preference for the male child over the female. The concept of social power is exerted within the web of customs, the positions of people in the society and their relation to each other (Kumar, 2001). Female infanticide, fetal sex determination, sex-selective abortion reflects the adverse effects of domination.

● Census 2011 shows decline of girl population under the age of 7 with around 8 million female foetuses aborted in the past ten years.

● The 2005 census shows infant mortality figures for females and males 61:56 with females more likely to be aborted based on cultural stereotypes, insecurity, biased attitude etc.

B. Caste discrimination and racism- Caste too is a mode of implementing social power and dominance. While the upper castes are held in high esteem, the lower castes are subjected to Karma (Kumar, 2001). Certain beliefs have been normalized and internalized in to one's behaviour. The Sudra is prohibited from having a meal in the vicinity of a Brahmin.

- The position of a Dalit woman is condemned by her status and skin colour. The skin complexion (fair or dark) is ingrained in the mind of the people. Violence in the form of molestation or harassment (physical and mental) among the labourers and the working class seems common whereas people become judgmental with the abuse of women belonging from high class or status.

- Abuse in the form of rape, harassment of a lower caste woman by an upper caste man is most often overlooked whereas if the minorities take recourse to such heinous crimes, immediate actions are taken to put the convicts from the lower castes behind bars. The inherent biasedness in law and justice in subjugating the submissive and favouring the dominant (those in power) is evident.

- Since slavery, education in the black community has been seen essential to the struggle for freedom. The owner of Frederick Douglas opines, "If he learns to read the Bible, it will forever unfit him to be a slave. He should know nothing but the will of his master and learn to obey it. Learning will only make him disconsolate and unhappy and once accomplished, he will be running away with himself." (Gulati, 2006).

- A male dominated curriculum in black studies results in the exclusion of black women from courses such as "Black literature" or "Black History". The only black women mentioned stand out as historical exceptions. The recent developments of black women studies at Spelman College speaks to the need. A full program in black studies would acknowledge the ordinary activities of women and men of colour and the exceptional contribution of those who led remarkable lives. (Gulati, 2006).

Despite the policies and programs recommended for uplifting the downtrodden, yet there is a dearth in its adequate implementation.

C. Religious dominance

- In *Namghars*, women are centred on males identified as *Bhakats* and *Namgharia*. They are required to imbibe the traditional attire (*mekhelasadar*) and cover their heads with *gamucha*.

- In *Barpeta Satra*, women are prohibited from entering the main arena. Their entrance is confined within a specific area. Women accept it as the cause behind their menstrual cycle and don't even protest. Considering it as taboo, patriarchal dominance is exerted on women.

● Muslim women veiled under *Burkhas* and *Hijab* accept it as an epitome of pride and honor.

D. Educational inequality- The education and status of women declined miserably by the end of the 18th century. Though the educational policies, centrally and state sponsored schemes are working towards equalizing educational opportunities between men and women, gender disparity prevails.

● According to 2011 census literacy rate for females stand at 65.46% compared to 82.14% for males. In 2011 in Assam, the literacy rate of males 78.81% and 67.27% for females. Illiteracy of parents and misconception that daughters won't benefit from educational investment hinders their progress.

● Lack of adequate Primary and Secondary schools within the catchment areas, accommodation, transport and communication facilities, concerns for their safety and security, financial constraints within the family, prioritizing the male child over the female are the common reasons for their dropping out.

● Near about 7% of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe students are enrolled in Higher education since they are deprived of access and opportunity to pursue Elementary education and succumbed to caste politics.

● **Reservation for female students-**
1. 40% of the seats are reserved for girls in higher educational institutions and around 50% of seats for recruitment of female teachers in different levels of education.
2. Under the Non Formal Education (NFE) program, 40% of the centres in States and 10% of the centres in Union Territories are exclusively reserved for females.
3. Out of 0.3 million NFE centres, 0.12 million are for females.
4. Engineering, Medical and other colleges in Orissa have reserved 30% of their seats for females.

E. Economic and Occupational inequality- Women are at a disadvantage in equal inheritance of property rights since 70% of the rural land is owned by men. In case of manual ploughing men were paid 103 rupees per day whereas women 55 rupees.

Social and economic outcomes of women's education are shaped by sex-gender systems that place women in subordination to men.

● For other agricultural operations, male to female wage ratio varies from 1.16 to 1.28.

- The tea garden labors are basically women who are made to utilize their nimble fingers in plucking leaves. Moreover, they are paid less since they rarely complain. Women labors thus preferable to male tea garden labors as they will eventually charge more wages.

- Along with variation in work in unorganized sector (construction sites) with women carrying bricks and men labors engaged in plaster works, their wages too vary.

- The Married Women Property Rights Act of 1974, Hindu Succession Act of 2005 provides equal inheritance rights to ancestral and jointly owned property but these are weakly enforced.

F. Discrepancy in political matters-

- The village councils in Nagaland don't comprise of female members. The Naga mothers form up an organization to resolve their conflicts.

- Though in social gatherings women are sent to the backdrop, yet in resolving any disputes, war, strikes etc. they are sent to the forefront. Though Right to Vote is a fundamental right for every individual irrespective of gender, caste, creed, race, religion etc., and the male members of the family especially the husband exerts dominance over the wife in voting the representatives of concerned political parties.

G. Dominance over the differently abled-

- Difference persist in providing facilities between men and women who are physically or mentally disabled. Even if a blind male child may be sent to school, in similar cases a blind female child may be deprived of schooling.

- However, a differently abled child from a high socio-economic background enjoys more security and facilities while that from a low socio-economic background may be compelled to stay at home unable to meet the necessities.

- Mentally deranged women are ostracized. They are left unbothered in the mental asylums. They are deprived of their rights and motherhood in the name of security.

Conclusion

Various schemes, measures and initiatives are undertaken to ensure equal status and empower women in personal and public life by eliminating all forms of discrimination, prejudice and unfair treatment meted out. In addition to that, what is required is the continuous monitoring and tracking of the implementations. Although the gender literacy gap has narrowed since 1970s, female illiteracy still constitutes a severe barrier to national and personal development in many nations. In Asia and the Pacific, 34% of women are illiterate compared to 22% of the male

population. **The Fourth World Conference on Women** envisions reduction of adult illiteracy with special emphasis on female literacy to reduce the male/female disparity. **UNESCO** states in **Women in a Changing Global Economy 1994 World Survey** that the success of development efforts depends on making women full partners. Education, by itself, is not a panacea but necessary for the advancement of women, subordinates and the marginalized. Education should not only aim towards social mobility or employment generation but also equalize women's empowerment in the decision making process in the socio-political and economic spheres. Gender Studies should be promoted as a part of various courses and educational institutions are encouraged to take up active programs to foster their development. Major emphasis should be laid on participation of the marginalized in vocational, technical, professional forums. The policy of non-discrimination will be pursued vigorously to eliminate sex stereotyping to promote women's participation in existing and emergent technologies. The timely revival and upgradation of the policies to make them more inclusive and responsive to the urgent needs of a particular situation will aid in accelerating the goal of gender parity in India.

References-

Agrawal, S.P. (2001). Women's Education in India (1995-98) Present Status, Perspective Plan, Statistical Indicators with a Global View. New Delhi: Concept Publishers.

Becker, M. (1999). Patriarchy and Inequality Towards a Substantive Feminism. University of Chicago Legal Forum, 9(1), 21-85.https://chicagobound. uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1999/isss1/3

Bhattacharya, S. et.al. (2015). Development of Women's Education in India 1850-1920. New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers.

Chakravarty, S. (2013). Violence Against Women with Disability in Mumbai, India: A Qualitative Study. Sage Journals, 3(3), https://doi.org/10.1177/215824 4013499144

Gulati, S. (2006). Women Education in the 21st Century. New Delhi: ABD Publishers.

Kasturi, L. (1992). Development, Patriarchy and Politics: Indian Women in the Political Process, 1947-1992.https://core.ac.uk

Khurana, N. (2018). Evaluating the Evolution of Patriarchy in India and the

West. Research Gate Journal, 6(2), 114-126. https://doi.org/10.15640/ijgws.v6n2p12

Kumar, T. (2021). The Culture of Patriarchy, Gender Bias and Class

Discrimination in Mahesh Dattani's Tara. Linguistics and Culture Review, 5(1), 60-69. https://doi.org/10.37028/lingcure.v5nS1.1314

Malhotra, A. (1995). Fertility, Dimensions of Patriarchy and Development in India. Population and Development Review, 21(2), 281-305. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2137495

Pandian, L. (2020). Patriarchy and Beauty: The Power over Indian Women. Sage Journals, 69(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2277436X20928441

Prakasham, J. (2017). Gender Inequality in India. Global Journal for Research Analysis, 6(9), 23-24. https://www.worldwidejournals.com

Rani, K. (2017). Challenges before Third Gender Community. Research Gate Journal, 4(5), 551-559. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/31801879_ Challenges_before_Third _Gender_Community

Rao, V.K. (2003). Social Education. New Delhi: APH Publishing Corporation.

Sivakumar, I. (2021). Masculinity and Challenges for Women in Indian Culture. Journal of International Women's Studies, 22(5), 427-434. https://vc.bridgew. edu

Tarafdar, M. (2016). Women Empowerment and National Development. New Delhi: Asian Offset Printers.

Tupe, N. (2014). Triangular Attitude of Patriarchy: A Major Issue of Lifelong Learning among Women in India. Journal of Business and Management Research, 3(4), 11-24. https://www.researchgate.net

DECONSTRUCTING STEREOTYPES: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY ON CHALLENGING SOCIETAL NORMS FOR INCLUSIVE PROGRESS

Navaneeta Borah
MA English (Dept. of English, Dibrugarh University)
MA Education (IGNOU)
M.Ed (Dept. of Education,Gauhati University)

Abstract

This paper explores the multifaceted issue of stereotypes in Indian society and the imperatives to challenge and overcome these preconceived notions. The paper delves into the pervasive nature of stereotypes across various dimensions, including gender, caste, religion, and rituals. It highlights the detrimental impact of stereotypes on individuals and communities, perpetuating discrimination and social inequalities. It emphasizes the importance of fostering awareness, education, and open dialogue to challenge stereotypes. It also discusses the role of media, education, and social initiatives in promoting inclusivity and dismantling ingrained stereotypes. By understanding the roots and consequences of stereotypes, this paper advocates for a collective effort to reshape societal perceptions, fostering a more tolerant, diverse, and equitable Indian society.

Introduction

Stereotypes are oversimplified and generalized beliefs about a particular group of people. They often arise from biases and can perpetuate misconceptions, hindering understanding and fostering discrimination. It's important to recognize and challenge stereotypes to promote a more inclusive and accurate view of diverse individuals and communities. India, with its diverse population, has its share of stereotypes. Some common ones include assumptions about arranged marriages, religious practices, and cultural traditions. However, it's crucial to remember that these stereotypes don't accurately represent the complexity and diversity of individuals and communities in India. Embracing a nuanced understanding helps break down stereotypes and fosters appreciation for the rich tapestry of Indian culture and society.

In Indian culture, stereotypes can include assumptions about traditional gender roles, hierarchical caste systems, or perceptions related to specific regional accents and customs. It's essential to recognize that these stereotypes oversimplify the diverse and dynamic nature of Indian culture. Embracing a more nuanced understanding allows for appreciation of the vast array of traditions, languages, and lifestyles present across India. Addressing stereotypes helps promote a more accurate and respectful portrayal of the cultural richness within the country.

Common stereotypes in Indian society often revolve around issues such as:

1. Arranged Marriages: Assuming that all marriages in India are arranged, overlooking the prevalence of love marriages. Stereotypes play a substantial role in the marriage system in India, shaping societal expectations and influencing partner selection. Traditional gender roles and stereotypes contribute to predefined notions of ideal spouses based on attributes like caste, religion, appearance, and socioeconomic status. These stereotypes can restrict individual choices, perpetuate social divisions, and impact the autonomy of those involved in the marriage process. However, societal changes, education, and a growing awareness are gradually challenging and redefining these stereotypes, fostering more diverse and inclusive marriage dynamics.

2. Caste-Based Stereotypes: Perceptions and biases based on caste, despite efforts to promote equality and social justice. Stereotypes play a significant role in perpetuating and reinforcing the caste system in India. Caste-based stereotypes are deeply ingrained in societal norms, influencing perceptions about individuals belonging to different castes. These stereotypes contribute to the discrimination, social hierarchies, and unequal treatment associated with the caste system. Stereotypical beliefs about specific castes often lead to prejudiced attitudes, affecting education, employment opportunities, and social interactions. Breaking free from these stereotypes is crucial for promoting social equality and fostering a more inclusive society. Efforts toward education, awareness, and social reform play a key role in challenging and dismantling caste-based stereotypes in India.

3. Gender Roles: Stereotypical expectations about the roles of men and women, which may not reflect the diversity of individual choices. Gender stereotypes are prevalent in Indian society and impact various aspects of life. Traditional expectations often dictate specific roles for men and women, influencing behaviour, opportunities, and social norms. Some common gender stereotypes in Indian society include

- **Traditional Gender Roles:** Stereotypes often prescribe traditional roles for men as breadwinners and women as homemakers, limiting opportunities for both genders.

- **Educational and Career Expectations:** Stereotypes can influence career choices and educational pursuits, with certain fields considered more suitable for one gender over the other.

   Expressing Emotions: There may be expectations regarding how men and women should express their emotions, with some emotions considered more acceptable for one gender over the other.

   Clothing and Appearance: Stereotypes influence societal expectations around clothing and appearance, prescribing certain dress codes and grooming standards based on gender.

- **Perceptions of Strength and Sensitivity:** Stereotypes associating strength with men and sensitivity with women, influencing societal expectations and behaviours.

Addressing these gender roles and stereotypes is crucial for promoting equality and creating a more inclusive and diverse society in India. Efforts toward gender sensitization and education play a significant role in challenging and dismantling these stereotypes.

4. Religion: Religion can influence stereotypes in several ways. Religious teachings often prescribe certain norms and values, and adherence to these norms can lead to the reinforcement of stereotypes about what is considered "right" or "normal" within a religious context. Religious beliefs may contribute to the formation of stereotypes by shaping moral and ethical standards. Individuals from different religious backgrounds may be stereotyped based on perceived differences in values and morality. Religious communities may develop in-group/out-group dynamics, fostering stereotypes about those who belong to a different religious community. This can lead to biases and discrimination based on religious identity. Many religious traditions have specific expectations regarding the roles and behaviours of men and women. These expectations can contribute to gender stereotypes within religious communities.

Changing stereotypical representations in Indian society requires a multifaceted approach:

1. Education and Awareness: Promote comprehensive education that challenges stereotypes and highlights the diversity of individuals and cultures. Implementations of educational programs that challenge stereotypes, promoting critical thinking, and fostering a deeper understanding of diverse cultures, religions, and communities. Including diverse perspectives in educational curricula to counteract one-sided narratives and encourage empathy.

2. Media Representation: Encouraging media outlets to portray a more realistic and diverse image of people, challenging stereotypes in movies, TV shows, and advertising. Encourage media outlets to portray diverse characters and stories

that break away from stereotypical representations. Positive portrayals can help reshape societal perceptions. Promote responsible journalism that avoids reinforcing stereotypes and instead provides balanced and nuanced perspectives.

3. Legal and Policy Reforms: Advocate for and support policies that promote gender equality, non-discrimination, and inclusivity in all aspects of life. Legal policies that can challenge gender stereotypes include:

- **Equal Employment Opportunities:** Enforcing laws that ensure equal opportunities and pay for men and women in the workplace helps challenge stereotypes related to gender roles and capabilities.
- **Anti-Discrimination Laws:** Legislation prohibiting discrimination based on gender in various spheres, such as education, healthcare, and public services, can work to dismantle stereotypes.

  Maternity and Paternity Leave: Policies that provide equal and flexible parental leave for both genders challenge the traditional notion that caregiving is solely a woman's responsibility.

  Sexual Harassment Laws: Strict laws against sexual harassment contribute to changing attitudes by creating a safer environment and promoting respectful behaviour.
- **Quota Systems:** Implementing quotas or affirmative action measures in political and corporate settings can help address gender imbalances, challenging stereotypes about leadership capabilities.
- **Education Reforms:** Incorporating gender-neutral and inclusive content in educational curricula helps challenge stereotypes from a young age, promoting equality in social roles.
- **Family Laws:** Reforms in family laws that promote equal rights in marriage, property, and inheritance can challenge traditional stereotypes related to familial roles.
- **Media Representation Regulations:** Policies promoting diverse and non-stereotypical representation of genders in media can play a crucial role in shaping societal perceptions.

By enacting and enforcing these policies, societies can actively work towards challenging and breaking down gender stereotypes, fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment.

4. Community Engagement: Foster open discussions within communities to challenge and change ingrained stereotypes. Encourage dialogue that promotes understanding and empathy. Community engagement programs can effectively challenge gender stereotypes by fostering awareness, education, and promoting inclusive practices. Here are ways such programs can make an impact:

- **Workshops and Training Sessions:** Conducting workshops on gender sensitivity, equality, and inclusivity can help community members understand and challenge their existing stereotypes.

- **Awareness Campaigns**: Engaging in public awareness campaigns through various mediums, such as posters, social media, and community events, can challenge stereotypes by presenting diverse and positive representations of men and women.

- **Educational Initiatives:** Implementing programs in schools and community centers that focus on teaching about gender equality, respectful relationships, and shared responsibilities can have a long-term impact.

- **Role Modelling:** Showcasing individuals who defy traditional gender roles as positive role models within the community can challenge stereotypes by demonstrating alternative ways of living and succeeding.

- **Community Dialogues:** Organizing open discussions and dialogues within the community provides a platform for people to share their perspectives, question stereotypes, and learn from one another.

- **Support Networks:** Establishing support networks for individuals facing discrimination based on gender encourages solidarity and helps challenge stereotypes by demonstrating the diverse experiences within the community.

- **Partnerships with Local Leaders:** Collaborating with local leaders, influencers, and community figures to champion gender equality can amplify the impact of community engagement programs.

  Inclusive Policies: Encouraging the development and implementation of community policies that promote gender equality can create a supportive environment for challenging stereotypes.

  Art and Cultural Initiatives: Using art, drama, and cultural events to challenge gender norms and stereotypes can be a powerful way to engage the community in conversations about societal expectations.

By involving the community actively in the process of challenging gender stereotypes, these programs have the potential to create lasting changes in attitudes and behaviours, contributing to a more inclusive and equal society.

To overcome stereotypical representations and promote inclusive progress for women, it's crucial to:

- **Promote Diverse Narratives:** Encourage and support diverse portrayals of women in media, literature, and other forms of expression to challenge stereotypes and showcase the richness of women's experiences.

- **Educational Initiatives:** Implement educational programs that challenge gender stereotypes from an early age, fostering a more inclusive mind-set among both boys and girls.

- **Equal Opportunities:** Advocate for and ensure equal opportunities for women in all sectors, including leadership roles, to break down stereotypes about women's capabilities.

- **Media Literacy:** Promote media literacy to help individuals critically analyse and question the portrayals of women in media, fostering a more discerning audience.

- **Support Women in STEM:** Encourage and support women's participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, challenging stereotypes about gender-specific career choices.

- **Legal Reforms:** Advocate for and support legal reforms that address gender bias, discrimination, and violence, ensuring a more equitable society.

- **Workplace Diversity Initiatives:** Implement and promote diversity and inclusion initiatives in workplaces, fostering an environment where women are valued for their skills and contributions.

- **Community Engagement:** Engage communities in conversations about gender roles and expectations, fostering a collective effort to challenge and overcome stereotypes.

- **Role Models:** Highlight and celebrate the achievements of diverse women as role models, showcasing a variety of paths to success and challenging preconceived notions.

- **Intersectionality:** Recognize and address the intersectionality of women's identities, considering factors like race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and sexual orientation to ensure a more nuanced understanding.

Challenging these stereotypes is essential for promoting gender equality and acknowledging the diversity of women's experiences, choices, and capabilities. Encouraging a more inclusive and empowering narrative benefits both women and society as a whole.

Overcoming gender stereotypes that affect men involves a combination of societal, educational, and individual efforts. Here are some strategies:

- **Promote Emotional Expression:** Challenge the notion that men should suppress emotions. Encourage emotional expression, vulnerability, and open communication, fostering a healthier understanding of masculinity.

- **Diverse Role Models:** Highlight diverse and positive male role models in various fields, showcasing that strength, success, and fulfilment come in different forms beyond traditional stereotypes.

- **Education on Gender Equality:** Incorporate education on gender equality in school curricula and workplace training, addressing stereotypes and fostering a more inclusive understanding of gender roles.

- **Media Literacy:** Develop media literacy programs to help individuals

critically analyze and question stereotypical representations of men in the media. Encourage a more nuanced and realistic portrayal.

- **Promote Work-Life Balance:** Advocate for workplace policies that support work-life balance, flexible working arrangements, and parental leave for men. This helps challenge the stereotype that men should prioritize career over family.

- **Encourage Hobbies and Interests:** Support the pursuit of diverse hobbies and interests, irrespective of whether they align with traditional gender norms. This helps break down stereotypes related to men's recreational choices.

- **Combat Toxic Masculinity:** Challenge toxic masculinity by promoting values of respect, empathy, and cooperation. Encourage discussions that reject harmful behaviors associated with rigid gender roles.

- **Mental Health Awareness:** Promote awareness and understanding of men's mental health issues. Encourage seeking help and emphasize that seeking support is a sign of strength, not weakness.

- **Supportive Peer Networks:** Foster supportive peer networks where men can share their experiences and challenges, creating a sense of community and understanding that transcends traditional stereotypes.

- **Parenting Education:** Provide parenting education that encourages shared parenting responsibilities, breaking away from stereotypes related to caregiving roles.

By addressing these aspects collectively, society can contribute to breaking down gender stereotypes that impact men, fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment that recognizes and values the diversity of experiences and expressions within the male population.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the journey towards inclusive progress necessitates a concerted effort to deconstruct stereotypes deeply embedded in our societal fabric. As we unravel preconceived notions surrounding gender, caste, religion, and various identities, we pave the way for a more inclusive and equitable future. It demands a commitment to diverse representation, fostering understanding through education, and promoting open dialogue that challenges ingrained beliefs. In dismantling stereotypes, we unlock the potential for individuals to thrive authentically, irrespective of societal expectations. Embracing inclusivity not only cultivates a richer, more vibrant society but also sets the stage for collective progress built on respect, empathy, and the celebration of our shared humanity. Addressing stereotypes is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and equitable society, where individuals are free to pursue their interests, challenge societal norms, and contribute to their fullest potential without the constraints of gender-based expectations.

References

Kumar, Nikhil. Are Stereotypes Holding India Back? A Look at the Top 10 Mindsets. Linkedln https ://www.linkedln.com > pulse (Google Scholar)

Gender and Society, Egyankosh, Ignou.

Bhushan, Aditi(2022,October)*The study of Gender Stereotypes and its affect over Indian Rural*

Schools & Society, International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research and Technlogy. [Google Scholar]

Evans Jonathan, Sehgal Neha. (2022,March) *How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society* (Google Scholar)

Tabassum, Naznin. Nayak, S. Bhabani. (2021, Feb.) *Gender Stereotypes and Their Impact on Women's Career Progressions from a Managerial Perspective*, Sage Journals (Googke Scholar)

GENDER SENSITIVITY AND LGBTQIA+ PEOPLE: A BRIEF REFLECTION ON CHALLENGES, AND ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Kannaki Bora

Assistant Professor

Department of Education, MNC Balika Mahavidyalaya

Abstract

The title of this article is A stereotypical attitude for LGBTQIA+ people and challenges faced by them. The article is based on the concept of LGBTQIA+, which will depict every gender included under this acronym. The concept of LGBTQIA+ is basically some genders that are different from the concept of male and female. These newly identified genders are the people, who have different anatomical, physical and emotional needs which make them differ from the concept of only maleand female category. The constitution of India has accepted these people and already given them identities as gender and freedom for equal rights in the society.Though, these newly added gender people have got their rights for equal opportunity by the constitution, but many people of the society are not able to accept them as the common people. Because of the stereotypical mind set of the people towards those genders makes them uncomfortable to live freely. So, this article has been focusing on the challenges faced by the LGBTQIA+ genders in the society and remedial measures can be taken by the educational institutions to reduce those stereotypes.

Keywords: *LGBTQIA+, Gender, Challenges*

Introduction

LGBTQIA+ is the acronym depicting different types of gender that are identified and accepted by the constitution of India. In the LGBTQIA+ community, the concept of "gender" refers to an individual's internal sense of their own identity, which may or may not align with the sex they were assigned at birth. Gender is distinct from biological sex, which is based on physical and anatomical characteristics. Gender encompasses a spectrum of identities beyond the traditional binary understanding of "male" and "female. When talking about gender,besides

male and female some other categories are also there which is very important to be discussed. As Constitution of India has given the identity to different genders so it cannot be possible to deny their existence in the society.

The acronym LGBTQIA+ stands for:L - Lesbian, G - Gay, B - Bisexual, T - Transgender, Q - Queer (or Questioning), I - Intersex, A - Asexual (or Ally). The "+" at the end is used to be inclusive of other identities and orientations that may not be explicitly listed in the acronym. This acronym represents a diverse and inclusive community of individuals with various sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions.

Gender and stereotypes in the LGBTQIA+ community can vary widely, as it is a diverse and inclusive community encompassing various gender identities and expressions. It's important to understand that stereotypes should not be applied to any group of people, including the LGBTQIA+ community, as they can perpetuate harmful and inaccurate assumption. This community is a diverse and inclusive group of people who share non-heteronormative sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions. This community advocates for acceptance, equal rights, and social recognition, as well as fighting against discrimination and prejudice based on gender or sexual orientation. It's important to note that the LGBTQIA+ community is incredibly diverse, and each letter represents different aspects of identity and experience.

Though, this community is getting their identity and rights but in reality, they are not accepted by most of the people of our society.Non-acceptances are creating different issues for the community. Lack of gender sensitization among people towards the LGBTQIA+ community is observed to a great extent. people of LGBTQIA+ people. Gender sensitization within the LGBTQIA+ community is a complex and multifaceted issue that encompasses a wide range of challenges. These problems are deeply rooted in societal norms, prejudices, and a lack of understanding about gender diversity and sexual orientations. In this Article , we will explore the problems faced by the LGBTQIA+ community in the context of gender sensitization, providing detailed examples for each issue.

1. **Discrimination and Prejudice:** Discrimination against LGBTQIA+ individuals remain a pervasive issue. Homophobia and transphobia are often the root causes of such discrimination. These prejudices manifest in various forms, from overt acts of hatred to more subtle biases.

2. **Lack of Legal Protections:** In many parts of the world, LGBTQIA+ individuals lack comprehensive legal protections. This can leave them vulnerable to discrimination and unequal treatment under the law.

3. **Violence and Hate Crimes:** Hate crimes targeting LGBTQIA+ individuals are an ongoing concern. These crimes can range from verbal abuse to physical violence, with transgender individuals being particularly vulnerable.

4. **Healthcare Disparities:** Access to appropriate healthcare can be a challenge for LGBTQIA+ individuals. Some healthcare providers may lack sensitivity and understanding of the unique health needs of this community, leading to suboptimal care.

5. **Family and Social Rejection:** Many LGBTQIA+ individuals experience family and social rejection. Coming out can be a difficult process, and not all families are accepting of their loved ones' identities and orientations.

   For example, a transgender person may be disowned by their family or subjected to conversion therapy, which can have severe psychological and emotional consequences. Social rejection can lead to feelings of isolation and lack of support.

6. **Intersectionality:** LGBTQIA+ individuals often have intersecting identities, which means they face compounded discrimination. People of colour, individuals with disabilities, or those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may encounter unique challenges.

7. **Lack of Inclusive Education:** Educational institutions may not provide inclusive curricula and safe environments for LGBTQIA+ students, leading to bullying and exclusion.

   For example: LGBTQIA+ students might be bullied or excluded in school due to their gender or sexual orientation, leading to lower academic achievement and psychological distress.

8. **Misgendering and Invalidation:** Incorrect use of names and pronouns, as well as invalidation of gender identities, can be deeply hurtful to transgender and non-binary individuals.

   Example: A non-binary person may experience distress when consistently referred to by the wrong pronouns or gender labels. This can lead to feelings of invisibility and lack of respect.

9. **Lack of Representation:** Media, entertainment, industry and advertising often underrepresent or misrepresent LGBTQIA+ individuals. This lack of representation or misrepresentation can perpetuate stereotypes and hinder understanding.

   Example: LGBTQIA+ characters in movies or TV shows might be portrayed in an offensive way, reinforcing biases and making it difficult for individuals to relate to or understand those with different gender identities and sexual orientations.

10. **Religious Discrimination:** Some religious institutions discriminate against LGBTQIA+ individuals, causing spiritual and emotional distress. Example: LGBTQIA+ individuals may feel alienated or unwelcome in their faith communities, leading to feelings of guilt, shame, or spiritual conflict.

Educational institutions can play a vital role in reducing stereotypes and fostering inclusivity for LGBTQIA+ individuals. The role and responsibilities of educational institution has given below:

Promoting Awareness and Understanding:

Educational institutions are platforms where students, teachers, and staff can be educated about the LGBTQIA+ community. They offer courses, workshops, and seminars that raise awareness about sexual orientation and gender identity. For instance, universities often offer LGBTQIA+ studies programs that explore the history, culture, and issues facing this community. By offering such courses, institutions help break down stereotypes by providing accurate information.

Creating Inclusive Policies:

Schools and colleges can implement inclusive policies that protect LGBTQIA+ students and staff from discrimination. For example, they can have non-discrimination policies that explicitly include all sexual orientations and gender identities. Such policies send a clear message that discrimination based on LGBTQIA+ status will not be tolerated, reducing stereotypes and biases and providing a healthy environment for them.

Supportive Environments:

Educational institutions can establish LGBTQIA+ resource centres, support groups, and safe spaces. These resources provide a sense of belonging and support for LGBTQIA+ individuals. The presence of these spaces can challenge stereotypes by showing that the institution values diversity and inclusion. An example is the "LGBTQ+ Student Union" or similar organizations that foster a sense of community and fight stereotypes.

Curriculum Diversification:

Incorporating LGBTQIA+ perspectives into the curriculum helps to normalize diverse identities and experiences. For instance, literature syllabi can include works by LGBTQIA+ authors, history syllabi can cover LGBTQIA+ historical figures and events, and health education can provide comprehensive information on sexual orientation and gender identity. This exposure helps break down stereotypes by humanizing LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Role Models and Visibility:

Educational institutions can invite LGBTQIA+ guest speakers and showcase LGBTQIA+ role models in various fields. When students see successful individuals who identify as LGBTQIA+, it challenges stereotypes and inspires them to be more accepting and open-minded. Guest lectures, career panels, and cultural events are good examples of these visibility efforts.

Research and Advocacy:

Colleges and universities often engage in research on LGBTQIA+ issues. This research can lead to policy changes and increased awareness. For example, studies on the mental health challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ youth can inform policies and interventions to better support these students.

Community Engagement:

Educational institutions can collaborate with LGBTQIA+ organizations and engage with the broader community to promote understanding and acceptance. For instance, organizing events like pride parades, awareness campaigns, and community service projects can foster positive interactions and reduce stereotypes.

Conclusion: In conclusion, it can be said that the problems of gender sensitization within the LGBTQIA+ community are numerous and deeply ingrained in society. These issues include discrimination, legal inequalities, stigmatization, violence, healthcare disparities, family rejection, intersectionality, a lack of inclusive education, misgendering, lack of representation, and religious discrimination. Addressing these problems requires a multi-faceted approach, including legal protections, education, public awareness, and fostering a more inclusive and accepting society that respects and celebrates diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. It is crucial to recognize the struggles faced by the LGBTQIA+ community and work towards creating a world where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation.For acting as a strong instrument to solve those problems faced by LGBTQIA+ people in the society, education can play an important role."Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world," which is said by famous Nelson Mandela. Education, can use its power through the curriculum and proper application of rights and values.For that, educational institutions serve as crucial agents in the fight against stereotypes and discrimination faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals. They do this by raising awareness, implementing inclusive policies, creating supportive environments, diversifying the curriculum, showcasing role models, addressing bullying, conducting research, and engaging with the community. These efforts contribute to a more inclusive and accepting society, where stereotypes are challenged and replaced with empathy and understanding.

References:

A. Miller (2009) "Sexuality and Human Rights: Discussion Paper", GenevaInternational Council on Human Rights Policy.

Chatterjee S (2014) Problems faced by LGBT people in the mainstream society: some recommendations. International journal of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary studies. Vol 1, p 317-331. Retrieved from: http://www.ijims. com

Dash H. K et al (2008) Gender Sensitization: Role in reforming society. Journal of national research centre for women in agriculture. Retrieved from: https://icar-ciwa.org.in

Day, J. K. et al (2019). Safe and supportive schools for LGBT youth: Addressing educational inequities through inclusive policies and practices. Journal of School Psychology, 79, 29-43. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2019.05.007

Grossman, A. H et al (2019). Gay-straight alliances, inclusive policy, and school climate: LGBTQ youths' experiences of social support and bullying. Journal of Research on Adolescence, 418-430. https://doi.org/10.1111/jora.12487

Komosa H (2013). Creating safe and supportive learning environments: A guide for working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth and families. Routledge

Sanjeev Kumar, Kalpana Devi, et.al (2019) "Protection against Violence and Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity", International Journal of Legal Developments and Allied Issues.

Vasundhara,S (2020) Importance of gender sensitization. International Journal of multidisciplinary and current educational research. Vol 2. P 120-25. Retrieved from: http://www.ijmcer.com

LGBTQ RIGHTS IN INDIA: CHALLENGES AND GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

Bithika Nandi
Assistant Professor
B.N. College, Dhubri

Abstract

LGBTQ rights are fundamentally human rights. Every individual, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, deserves to be treated with dignity, respect, and equality. Therefore, LGBTQ rights are of paramount importance in fostering a just, inclusive, and equitable society. Recognizing and protecting the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals contributes to various aspects of societal well-being and human rights. Upholding LGBTQ rights reinforces the principles of universal human rights and non-discrimination. Again, promoting LGBTQ rights is integral to advancing social justice and fostering an inclusive society. It challenges discriminatory practices and attitudes, creating a space where individuals can express their authentic selves without fear of persecution or marginalization.

In light of the above, the paper explores the dynamic landscape of LGBTQ rights in India, delineating the multifaceted challenges faced by the community and scrutinizing the concurrent initiatives undertaken by the government.

***Keywords:** LGBTQ rights, Challenges, Role of India*

Introduction

The debate surrounding human rights has broadened to include a variety of identities and orientations in recent decades, with an emphasis on the rights of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) people1. The ideals of equality, dignity, and freedom for everyone-regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression-are the cornerstones of the fight for LGBTQ rights. Historically, members of the LGBTQ community have faced systemic discrimination, social stigma, and legal persecution in various parts of the world. Many societies have upheld hetero-normative values, marginalizing those who do not conform to traditional gender norms or heterosexual relationships. In response

to these challenges, the fight for LGBTQ rights has gained momentum, driven by a collective demand for recognition, acceptance, and equal treatment under the law. LGBTQ rights are necessary because it is an indisputable fact that every person has the right to live a life free from discrimination and prejudice. Denying fundamental human rights on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity not only violates individual liberties but also feeds a vicious cycle of marginalization that impedes societal cohesiveness, mental health, and personal growth. As we dig deeper into the intricate terrain of LGBTQ rights, it becomes clear that the fight is about more than just legislative changes-it's also about cultural revolutions, educational programs, and a larger public awareness of varied identities. This introduction lays the groundwork for a more thorough examination of the difficulties the LGBTQ community faces, the advancements achieved in gaining their rights, and the continued work needed to create an environment in which everyone may live freely and authentically, devoid of prejudice and discrimination.

Issues and challenges faced by LGBTQ community

Due to a combination of discriminatory policies, cultural norms, and historical prejudices, the LGBTQ population suffers a wide range of problems. Many people on the LGBTQ spectrum still struggle with the following issues, despite notable advancements in some areas.

(i)   Discrimination and Stigma:

LGBTQ individuals often face discrimination in various facets of life, including employment, education, housing, and healthcare. According to a 2018 UNESCO report, LGBTQ children experience significant bullying and discrimination in schools, colleges, and other settings, according to a 2018 UNESCO report. It frequently takes people years to recover from this act of bullying and prejudice since it leaves a lifelong scar on their lives (UNESCO Report 2019)[2]. The Problem is so deeply rooted in the society that the LGBTQ individuals have to face discrimination in their professional life as no company wants to recruit them as that thought does not go well with society[3]. The stigmatization by the society faced by a LGBTQ person can lead to social exclusion, bullying, and harassment, contributing to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.

(ii) Legal Obstacles:

Many nations still have laws that fail to protect LGBTQ people from discrimination or that criminalize same-sex relationships.

Legal obstacles may prevent transgender people in particular from acquiring accurate identification documents that accurately reflect their gender identity.

(iii) Hate crimes and violence:

The issue of hate crimes against LGBTQ individuals, which can involve physical harm or even homicide, remains grave.

Violence against transgender people is disproportionately high, especially for transgender women of colour.

(iv) Health Inequalities:

LGBTQ people may experience inequities in healthcare, such as limited access, prejudice from medical staff, and a dearth of care that is sensitive to their cultural background.

The LGBTQ population has higher incidence of mental health problems, substance misuse, and suicide, which are frequently related to prejudice and social pressures.

(v) Family and Social Rejection:

Many LGBTQ individuals experience rejection from their families and communities, leading to a higher risk of homelessness and mental health challenges. Social isolation can contribute to feelings of loneliness and a lack of support networks. In this regard, Women suffer the most for being members of the LGBTQ Community as they are often forced to marry a man by the family4.

(vi) Lack of Inclusive Education:

LGBTQ-inclusive education is often lacking, contributing to ignorance, stereotypes, and prejudice.

Bullying and discrimination in schools can lead to lower academic performance and mental health issues among LGBTQ youth.

(vii) Inadequate Legal Protections for Transgender Individuals:

Transgender individuals often face specific challenges, including a lack of legal recognition of their gender identity, limited access to gender-affirming healthcare, and high rates of unemployment.

(viii) Access to Gender-Affirming Care:

Limited access to gender-affirming healthcare, including hormone therapy and gender confirmation surgeries, can be a significant challenge for transgender individuals.

Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive and intersectional approach that involves legal reforms, educational initiatives, advocacy for inclusive policies, and efforts to change societal attitudes. Progress is being made, but there is still much work to be done to ensure that LGBTQ individuals can live free from discrimination and enjoy the same rights and opportunities.

A brief history of the fights of LGBTQ community for their rights in India

The struggle for LGBTQ rights in India has a rich and complex history marked by legal battles, societal challenges, and significant milestones. Here's a brief overview of key events in the fight for LGBTQ rights in India:

(i) **Pre-Independence Era:** India's history has instances of fluid gender identities and diverse sexual orientations, often intertwined with religious and cultural traditions. British colonial-era laws, such as Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) enacted in 1860, criminalized "unnatural offenses," including consensual same-sex relations.

(ii) **Post-Independence to the Late 20th Century:** After gaining independence in 1947, India retained colonial-era laws, including Section 377, which continued to criminalize same-sex relationships. The LGBTQ community faced societal discrimination, and there was limited visibility of LGBTQ issues.

(iii) **Activism and Legal Challenges:** The late 20th century saw the emergence of LGBTQ activism in India. In 1992, the AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA) was one of the first organizations to publicly challenge Section 377. Over the years, LGBTQ activists, organizations, and allies worked towards raising awareness and advocating for the repeal of discriminatory laws.

(iv) **Naz Foundation Case (2001):** The turning point in the legal battle came in 2001 when the Naz Foundation, an NGO, filed a petition challenging the constitutionality of Section 377. The Delhi High Court initially decriminalized consensual same-sex acts in 2009, stating that the law violated the fundamental rights of equality and non-discrimination.

(v) **Supreme Court Setback (2013):** In a setback, the Supreme Court overturned the Delhi High Court verdict in 2013, reinstating the criminalization of same-sex relations under Section 377. This decision prompted widespread protests and renewed efforts by activists to challenge the discriminatory law.

(vi) **Navtej Singh Johar Case (2018):** In a historic decision in 2018, the Supreme Court revisited its stance in the Navtej Singh Johar case. The court declared that consensual adult same-sex relations were no longer criminal and that Section 377 was unconstitutional, recognizing the rights of LGBTQ individuals.

(vii) **Ongoing Challenges and Progress:** While the legal victory was significant, challenges persist, including societal stigma, discrimination, and the need for comprehensive anti-discrimination laws. LGBTQ activists continue to advocate for equal rights, inclusive policies, and societal acceptance.

India's journey toward LGBTQ rights reflects a dynamic interplay between legal, social, and cultural factors. The decriminalization of same-sex relations marked a major triumph, but the ongoing struggle emphasizes the need for broader societal acceptance and comprehensive legal protections for the LGBTQ community in India.

Role of India in protecting LGBTQ rights

India has played a crucial role in shaping the discourse around LGBTQ rights, both regionally and globally. While the journey towards full LGBTQ inclusion is ongoing, there have been significant developments that highlight the country's evolving stance on protecting the rights of the LGBTQ community:

(i) **Legal Decriminalization:** The landmark Navtej Singh Johar judgment in 2018, in which the Supreme Court decriminalized consensual same-sex relations, marked a monumental shift in India's legal landscape. This decision overturned the colonial-era Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalized "unnatural offenses."

(ii) **International Advocacy:** India, with its growing influence on the global stage, has increasingly participated in international forums advocating for LGBTQ rights. The country has supported resolutions at the United Nations promoting non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

(iii) **Government Initiatives:** The Indian government has taken steps to recognize and protect transgender rights. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, passed in 20195, aims to provide legal recognition to transgender individuals and protect them from discrimination.

(iv) **Public Awareness and Media Representation:** There has been a noticeable increase in public awareness and discussion around LGBTQ issues in India. Media, including mainstream cinema and television, has started to feature more diverse representations of sexual orientations and gender identities.

(v) **Challenges and Opportunities:** Despite these positive developments, challenges remain. The lack of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws leaves the LGBTQ community vulnerable to various forms of discrimination in areas such as employment, education, and healthcare.

Transgender individuals, in particular, continue to face social stigma and barriers to accessing gender-affirming healthcare and legal recognition of their gender identity.

(vi) **Civil Society and Activism:** Civil society organizations and LGBTQ activists have played a vital role in pushing for legal reforms and raising awareness. These groups continue to advocate for comprehensive rights, including marriage equality and anti-discrimination legislation.

(vii) **Workplace Inclusion:** Some private corporations in India have taken steps to create more inclusive workplaces, recognizing the value of diversity and the need for LGBTQ-friendly policies.

Conclusion:

While India has made substantial strides in recognizing and protecting LGBTQ rights, there is still work to be done. Advocates stress the importance of comprehensive legal frameworks, education, and continued societal acceptance to ensure the full integration of LGBTQ individuals into all aspects of Indian society. The role of India in protecting LGBTQ rights is dynamic and evolving, reflecting broader shifts in societal attitudes and a commitment to upholding the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

References

Tanweer, A. (2018). LGBT Rights in India. International Journal of Law Management & Humanities, 2(1), 1-2. https://www.ijlmh.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/LGBT-Rights-in-India.pdf

UNESCO (2019). A Global Report on LGBTI Education: Educating for Diversity and Equality. Paris, France: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Retrieved from https://en.unesco.org/lgbtieducation/global-report.

Ferrera, S. (2009). Social Barriers to Inclusive Education: The Case of LGBT Young People. In S. Ferrera (Ed.), Inclusive Education: A Global Agenda. New York: Routledge.

Williams, J. S. (2009). Transgender People and Marriage: The Importance of Legal Planning and Public Education. The Georgetown Journal of Gender and the Law.

Government of India (2019). Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. https://socialjustice.nic.in/sites/default/files/The Transgender Persons Protection of Rights Bill 2019.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF WOMEN AT WORKPLACE

Deepanwita Mahanta
Ad hoc Teacher
Department of Political Science, Tamulpur College, Tamulpur

Abstract

In the present era, Sexual Harassment is a topic of interest and an area of concern. Sexual Harassment results in violation of the Fundamental Rights of a person to equality as per Article 14 and 15 and the right to live with dignity as mentioned under Article 21 of the Constitution. Also, Sexual Harassment at Workplace is detrimental to Fundamental Right to Occupation enjoyed by the women under Article 19. The 2021 National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) data, in India there have reported 17,539 cases of Sexual Harassment in the country of which 418 were from workplace. The NCRB report revealed that Assam, Maharashtra, Tamilnadu, and West Bengal have more cases of workplaces Sexual Harassment against women. The Supreme Court of India, for the first time in the Vishaka Guidelines, acknowledged Sexual Harassment at Workplace as a human rights violation in 1997. Also, the POSH Act protects against sexual harassment in the workplace. The Sexual Harassment of women at workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act was passed in 2013 and it broadened the scope of Vishaka guidelines. This research paper tries to highlight different aspects of Sexual Harassment of women at workplace. Some of the prominent causes of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace are highlighted here with some recommendations and suggestions for the redressal of the problem. Also, as a good citizen it is important to build a clear conceptual understanding regarding the topic. Finally, the current study recommends that, yes, it is hightime to raise a voice against the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace.

"It took me quite a long time to develop a voice, and now that I have it, I am not going to be silent." —Madeleine Albright

Keywords: *Workplace, Sexual Harassment, Women, POSH (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013, Vishaka Guidelines, CEDAW (The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women)*

Introduction

Sexual Harassment is defined as any behaviour of a sexual nature that affects the dignity of women and men, which is considered as unwanted, unacceptable, inappropriate and offensive to the recipient and that creates an intimidating, hostile, unstable or offensive work environment. Sexual Harassment in the workplace is a form of sex discrimination which negatively affects the working environment, undermines gender equality at work, creates unfair practices in employment and adversely impacts the dignity and well-being of workers. It creates psychological anxiety and stress for victims. One of the difficulties is to define this concept as it involves a set of behaviours, even victims find it difficult to explain what they have experienced. Also still there is no single definition which can define the behaviour. According to International Labour Organization report 2022, around 205 million employees has experienced sexual violence and harassment at the workplace. The United Nations Labour agency added the recurrent episodes of sexual harassment are higher among women at 56.5% at work. CEDAW is often described as the international bill of rights for women, and which is ratified by India, is one of the key international agreements that guides the work of United Nations women in achieving gender equality and empowering women and rights.

Statement of the Problem

Women provide an arm and play a significant role in nation's development while considering their efforts in economic support, domestic activities and emotional attributes which greatly enhance the economic fortunes of family, society and nation. Therefore, while performing these roles, she should be provided with safe and secure environment at workplace. Thus, sexual harassment affects the social and psychological behaviour of women within and outside the workplace. Subsequently sexual harassment hinders the performance of women at workplace and threaten their earning potential.

Objectives of the Study

The study is focused to find out prevalence of sexual harassment and its impact among working women. Three specific areas are highlighted in the study. Those are

a. To understand the meaning and concept of sexual harassment at the workplace.

b. Highlight the causes that tend to sexual harassment of women at workplace.

c. Make some suggestions and recommendations to prevent the sexual harassment of women at workplace.

Methodology

The current study "Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace" is based on both primary and secondary data collected from different sources. The primary data was collected from different government reports and acts. So far as secondary sources are connected, they were accumulated from number of research papers, articles and books. Furthermore, this study applies descriptive method.

Conceptual Understanding

a. What is Workplace?

A Workplace is a location where someone works, for their employer or themselves, a place of employment. Workplace is defined as, "Any place visited by the employee arising out of or during the course of employment, including transportation provided by the employer for undertaking such a journey" (S.H. Act 2013). Establishing an enjoyable place to work is important for employee retention and satisfaction, which allows to focus on growth and development of service.

b. What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual Harassment is defined as any behaviour of sexual nature that affects the dignity of women and men, which is considered as unwanted, unacceptable, inappropriate and offensive to the recipient, and that creates and intimidating, hostile and unstable or offensive work environment. Sexual harassment can happen to anyone, no matter age, sexual orientation, on gender identity. Sexual harassment is not a problem that exclusively targets females. Many men experience harmful sexual harassment at work each year. Unfortunately, a women can be sexually harassing another woman and in the same way, a man can be sexually harassing another man. According to Equal Employment Opportunity Commission,

"Sexual Harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours and other verbal or physical harassment of sexual nature in the workplace or learning environment."

c. What is Sexual Harassment to Women?

Sexual Harassment of Women refers to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours or other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that specifically targets women and creates a hostile or offensive environment. It is a form of gender-based discrimination that aims to assert power and control over women through sexual means. This can include acts such as unwanted touching, explicit comments, sexual jokes, or any other behaviour that undermines a woman's dignity and autonomy. Sexual harassment of women is a pervasive issue that occurs in various settings, perpetuating gender inequality and

violating women's rights. It is crucial to address and combat this problem to ensure the safety and well-being of all women.

Basic Causes

There are no specific causes for Sexual Harassment, it can happen anywhere, to anyone, at any given time. Here, we will analyse some of the prominent causes which are quite perceived in our society.

a. **Male Domination:** Women who work in male dominated occupations may be more susceptible to sexual harassment than those who work in non-male dominated occupation. Much of the harassment women face at the workplace is not sexual in content or design but the motive behind this is to show domination of male folk. And this kind of behaviour determine the gender difference and to claim work as a domain of masculine mastery.

b. **Inferior Job Position:** It is important to note that an inferior job position doesn't directly contribute to or cause of sexual harassment of women in the workplace. In this case, its may frequently targets the victims work, personality, appearance, etc. Example - offensive language, character attacks, and manifestation of disgrace or intolerance towards a specific race.

c. **Misperception about friendly nature of women:** Each human being is unique and has their own thoughts and actions that are like no one else's. Therefore there are some women, who are friendly in nature. Unfortunately, some men in the workplace perceive them to be easily accessible.

d. **Higher Academic Profile and Lesser job Opportunity:** According to the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2020-21, female enrolment on Higher Education to 2.01 Cr. When these talented women start their journey as an employee they are harassed by demands of sexual favours by the person in charges and for that they are assured to be offer a job. Later they are often asked for sexual favours for promotion, salary increase and other conditions of employment.

e. **Aggressive nature of male gender:** Different studies reveal that as compared to women, men are more aggressive in nature. It can be said that Sexual Harassment is an outcome of extreme competitiveness and ego or there is always a fear of losing position of power or dominance among men. They don't want to appear weak in the eyes of other men. In order to show their dominance, they engage in harassing the women colleagues.

Suggestion and recommendations

Here are some of the suggestions and recommendations which will help in prevention of sexual harassment incidents at workplace

a. Implement a clear and comprehensive anti-sexual harassment policy-

Develop a detailed and easily accessible policy to all employees. It will help a clear understanding of the policy.

b. Educate and train employees-

Conduct mandatory training sessions on sexual harassment prevention for all employees of the institution. Also encourage an open dialogue about sexual harassment, fostering an environment where one feels comfortable reporting incidents. Also, the POSH Act should be included.

c. Establish multiple reporting channels-

Create confidential and multiple reporting options so that victims or witnesses can report incidents without fear of retaliation.

d. Promote gender equality and inclusion-

Foster a culture of gender equality promoting diversity and inclusion initiatives, promote women's participation and encourage representation in decision making roles especially in leadership positions.

e. Reservation for women-

Maximum job opportunity and promotion should be reserved for women which will help them not get emotionally tracked and avoid their future worry.

Conclusion

Today, most women play dual roles- Personal and Professional in urban areas. They play the role of mother, wife, homemaker, cook, teacher, friend, nurse as well as professional worker. Therefore, it is important to provide a better work environment to women. The government of India has enacted a legislation named POSH Act in 2013 to address the issue of sexual harassment faced by the women in the workplace. Sexual harassment of women at workplace is a problem which is not possible to solve only by government initiatives, but also through other civil societies like Non-Governmental Organization, eminent personalities of the society should lead the movement, example-"Mee-too Movement". Mee-too movement, an awareness movement around the issue of sexual harassment and sexual abuse of women in the workplace that grew to prominence in 2017. Besides that, to create awareness among the employers and employees seminars, workshops, mock drills should be organised by the competent authority. Maximum job opportunities and higher positions for women in the organizational set up will empower women within and outside the workplace which in turn will help to eradicate this evil practice of Sexual Harassment at Workplace.

"*You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of women*"

–Jawaharlal Nehru

References

Aashima Khanna, Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace, EISSN 2348-1269, IJRAR (International Journal of Research and Analytical Review)

Ashraful Islam, Workplace Sexual Harassment of Women in Assam: An Overview, ISSN 1567-214X

Handbook on Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act 2013, Government of India, Ministry of Women and Child Development

Rouf Ahmad Bhat &Prof.Dr. Anita Deshpande, An Overview of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace in India: An Analytical Study, ISSN- 2319-8753

AsthaPoonia, Sexual Harassment at Workplace, Amity International Journal of Juridical Sciences (Vol.5, 2019)

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER ROLES AND THEIR IMPACT ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Pongki Gogoi[1]
RajibLusson Saud[2]
Advocate

Abstract

Gender equality is a human right, it is a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world. Significance of gender equality in the social, political, economic, and cultural aspect is to achieve the idea of welfare state in real. Gender roles are not static and vary with culture, society, and historical periods. Constitution of India guaranteed equality between women and men. The Government initiatives are expanding the scope of women's legal entitlements in various fields. Despite this, in practice the inequality persists in everywhere on daily basis. The patriarchal setup in Indian society and stereotypes towards women contributed to the fundamental inequality between sexes. Attaining gender equality involves greater participation of women in the public sphere, encouraging them to political and economic decision making and to challenge prevailing discriminatory practices that hinder their full potential. Many scholars tried to analyse the literacy rate of women, governments schemes related to women protection, financial assistance to rural women. Some are of the opinion that customs, rituals, marriage bars etc. create barrier for gender equality. This is a humble endeavour to trace out the root cause of inefficacy of the laws in stopping disparity and to promote couple equity and to narrowing gender gaps.

Keywords: *Gender equality, Government initiatives, Patriarchal society, Stereotypes, Couple equity.*

"I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved."

–B.R Ambedkar

The advent of Women's career has fundamentally changed the contribution towards the growth of the country's economy. Women have achieved so much more these days, but it doesn't seem enough. The question, can men and women ever be equal, has been raised many times, but it seems rhetorical somehow. Despite numerous movements advocating for gender equality, this lack of progress in addressing ingrained biases, raised concerns about what it means for India-a developing country burdened by caste, entrenched biases against women, and deeply-rooted stereotypical cultural beliefs that often go unchallenged. From time-to-time various initiatives have been taken for gender awareness and sensitization in the society regarding rights of women. It has been experienced that gender-based discriminations still exist in all walks of life and every part of society, including everyday interactions at the workplace and even in household work.

Gender sensitization helps people in examining their personal attitudes and beliefs in questioning the realities of both sexes. It helps them determine which assumptions in matters of gender are valid and which are stereotyped. The need to understand the basic concepts like difference between sex and gender, gender roles, gender stereotypes, gender division of labour, gender-based violence, masculinity, patriarchy and so on are necessary to understand that Gender is not about "Women" it's about "People".

The words "sex" and "gender" are often used interchangeably, their definitions are different. In general terms, Sex refers to the biological differences between males and females, such as the genitalia and genetic differences. And hence, are anatomical and physiological.

Gender involves social roles and relationships, norms, and behaviours that boys and girls are informally taught, such as how they should interact with others, what they might aspire to become and what opportunities they might expect, based on their sex.

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. There has been progress over the last decades, but the world is not on track to achieve Gender Equality(GOAL 5) by 2030 under Sustainable Development Goal(SDGs) by United Nation. Women and girls represent half of the world's population and therefore also half of its potential. On average, women in the labour market still earn 23 percent less than men globally and women spend about three times as many hours in unpaid domestic and care work compared to men.

Status of Women in India

Gender disparity and discriminations are found in India even today. In India, women face numerous discriminatory practices, acts of violence, and systems of oppression, including female foeticide, child marriage, domestic abuse, sexual assault, honour killings, human trafficking, and wage disparities. From the historic days of

Mahabharata, in Indian society, a female was always dependent on male members of the family. On the other hand, in the 19th century Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and various other social reformers laid stress on women's education, prevention of child marriage, withdrawals of evil practice of sati, removal of polygamy etc. The early 20th century, it saw the rise of the National Movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi who was in favour of removing all the disabilities of women.

Guaranteeing the rights of women and giving them opportunities to reach their full potential is a Fundamental right given by the Constitution of India. Moreover, the Judiciary is constantly trying to protect the rights of women. It is not only for attaining gender equality, but also for meeting a wide range of social development goals. The Constitution of India has certain provisions that specifically focus on women empowerment and prevents discrimination against women in the society. Article 14 talks about equality before law. Article 15 enables the state to make special provisions for women.

Most important area of focus in attaining gender equality is women's economic and political empowerment. As per Census 2011, India's population was 121.1 Crore with 48.5% female population and the total population is expected to reach to 152.2 crore during 2036 with a slightly improved percentage of female population (48.8). Though women comprise almost 49% of the country's population, and most of them perform long hours of unpaid domestic work (Women, 2022). At all levels, including at home and in the public arena, women are widely underrepresented as decision-makers. Being women's role as in policy making, decision making and political participation is crucial for achieving gender equality and genuine democracy.

Economic and Political Empowerment

In the changing dynamics of the society women empowerment is much relevant and very important. Education plays an important role in building self-confidence among women. It also allows her to change her status in the society. Education enables and builds confidence to take decisions reasonably.

Government Initiative - The government of India has taken the issue of empowerment of women with all seriousness. As the progress of humanity is incomplete without women therefore successive governments have launched number of schemes for empowerment of women in male dominated society.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development, has launched 'Mission Shakti' (Integrated Women Empowerment Programme) - an Umbrella Scheme to make women economically empowered, exercising free choice over their minds and bodies in an atmosphere free from violence and threat. It also seeks to reduce the care burden on women and increase female labour force participation by promoting skill development, capacity building, financial literacy, access to micro-credit etc.

'Mission Shakti' has two sub-schemes - 'Sambal 'and 'Samarthya'. While the "Sambal" sub-scheme is for safety and security of women, the "Samarthya" sub-scheme is for empowerment of women. The components of 'Sambal' sub scheme consist of erstwhile schemes of One Stop Centre (OSC), Women Helpline (WHL), Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) with a new component of Nari Adalats - women's collectives to promote and facilitate alternative dispute resolution and gender justice in society and within families. The components of 'Samarthya 'sub-scheme consist of erstwhile schemes of Ujjwala, Swadhar Greh and Working Women Hostel have been included with modifications. In addition, the existing National Creche Scheme for children of working mothers and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) under umbrella ICDS have now been included in Samarthya. A new component of Gap Funding for Economic Empowerment has also been added in the Samarthya Scheme (Ministry, 2022). The 'Lakhpati Didi' initiative exemplifies the Indian government's visionary commitment to women's empowerment and socioeconomic advancement. The government's goal is to create two crore "lakhpatididis" (prosperous sisters) in villages. This scheme aligns with the broader mission of poverty alleviation and economic empowerment. Under the scheme, women will be trained in skills like LED bulb making, plumbing, among others.

Women representation in politics is a vital step towards gender equality. However, according to Global Gender Gap Report 2022, India ranks 48th out of 146 in Political Empowerment. A historic moment as the President of India has given assent to Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam Bill, Women's Reservation Bill of 2023, officially titled The Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023, has been passed in Parliament which provides 1/3rd reservation for women in Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. It not only encourages more women to participate in politics but also inspires women to take on leadership roles in other sectors. This historic legislation champions the cause of gender parity. This legislation is a great hope for women to voice their grievances and assert their rights.

Social Construction of Gender

Gender is not a factor that can be ignored, because the person who sacrifices their career to be in home is- historically and still today- most often a woman. Woman aren't lazy or less talented, they start out on an almost equal footing. The fundamental problem of women trying to attain successful career and a joyful family are in balancing personal & professional life. Even ambitious and talented women have felt the need to slow down their career for greater good of their family. Men can have a family and step up because women step back from their careers to provide more time to the family. When women have kids, things really do change with family formation and care duties that women disproportionately take. Both are deprived: men forgo time with family; women forgo career (Goldin, 2021).

Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes are harmful because they take a simple idea and try to say it works for everyone in a group. Gender stereotypes sometimes make people stop doing an activity they like and really want to do. They make it harder for people to be themselves and to like what they like. They are constructed through sayings, songs, proverbs, media, religion, culture, custom, education, drama, etc. The male stereotype is described through the three Ps: Provider, Protector and Procreator; Female stereotypes: Belonging to the world of motherhood and wifehood, Nurture (to put her family's welfare before her own; be loving, compassionate, obedient caring, nurturing, and sympathetic).

The Supreme Court of India has taken a significant step to challenge outdated ideas, especially those affecting women, by releasing Handbook on Combating Gender Stereotypes.

Its main aim is to provide legal experts with the means to "identify, understand, and challenge stereotypes about women" (Handbook, 2022) It introduces new words for lawyers and judges to use in court, aiming to fight harmful beliefs. It is crucial to acknowledge that women may be conditioned to undertake these tasks precisely because of the stereotype, which has led to: (i) societal expectations that women will perform these tasks; (ii) limited career options for women; (iii) the portrayal of women in media as performing these tasks; and (iv) stigmatization of women who pursue professional careers. By consciously avoiding the use of stereotypes in decision-making and stereotype promoting language, the judiciary can foster an environment where gender equality is upheld and respected. Words matter, as they shape narratives and influence societal attitudes. The use of more inclusive language can help break harmful patterns of thinking.

Patriarchal Attitude of Society

Patriarchy is a social system where men/boys are considered superior and more powerful than women/girls. Patriarchy is a social construction and the values and implications based on biological differences between men and women are the result of culture. Patriarchy is defined as having the control of the labor, reproductive power, and sexuality of women for the benefit of men. This all started when private property came into existence. People wanted to pass on their legacy, but men did not know who their children were, only women were known as mothers because there were no families. That is when patriarchy came. After these men had taken control over social system and it became male-dominated society, where men benefit from a higher status and greater power in most aspects of life.

The patriarchal mindset affects girls deeply in terms of how to dress, what to say, where to go, whom to meet, limiting their choices to great extent. Their autonomy, control over body and mobility is part of their socialization from an early age. These practices exclude women from participation in, or contact with, spaces of greatest power economically, politically, culturally, and religiously. One

such example of gender inequality is the Sarpanch Pati culture where men wield power behind elected women in grassroots politics. This led to undermining of women's rights and empowerment and deprivation of women's voice and representation in decision-making.

While our society is changing, and women are breaking glass ceiling- becoming political heads, scientists, fighter pilots, athletes, entrepreneurs - the quantum and direction of change in the socio cultural-political domain is still rather slow.

Education is no doubt a primary step for progressive society, but it is not the only solution. Women should empower themselves being aware of their oppression, indicating initiative, and confiscating chances to bring a shift in their status. Empowerment must come from within the soul. Women need to empower themselves by bringing a major change in their attitude. Women must know that opportunities will not reach their laps. They should fight back to rebuild their prominent position in Indian communities and societies. They must flourish hard to carry out their rights and maintain justice & equality in society. They need to work vigorously for the entire elimination of poverty, dowry-ills, illiteracy, and productive implementation of all programmes and laws related to women.

Conclusion

Gender equality is a human right, unfortunately women in our society faces a constant gap in access to status, opportunities, and decision-making power. With all these initiatives and responses haven't worked to erase the difference in gender gap and these will never provide a complete solution to the actual problem because they treat only the symptoms. To eradicated the inequality or even narrow the gap, we must first plunge deeper towards the root of these setbacks. Otherwise, these solutions are economic equivalent to tossing the Band Aid to someone with Bubonic plague (Goldin, 2021). To achieve gender parity, a shift in societal attitudes and family support is essential and to encourage males to actively support gender equality and act as allies for their females and encouraging for couple equity in career and family. True equality lies in access to resources and services, to social protection, family matters and in decision-making processes at all levels. All these are necessary preconditions for women to live with dignity and be active members of society.

References

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. (n.d.). The Sustainable Development Goals. https://www.un.org/sustainable development /gender-equality/

Baruah, A., & Mitra, A. (2023, October 10). Reservation: Reshaping the political landscape. *The Assam Tribune*, p 6.

GenderSensitization. (2020). National Commission for Women. http:// www.ncw.nic.in/sites/default/files/Booklet-%20Gender%20Sensitization _0.pdf

Goldin, C. (2021). *Career and Family*. Princeton University Press. https://www.google.co.in/books/edition/Career_and_Family/6U4oEAAA QBAJ ?hl=en

Handbook on Combating Gender Stereotypes. (2023). Supreme Court of India. https://main.sci.gov.in/pdf/LU/04092023_070741.pdf

Hazarika, D. (2011). *Women Empowerment in India*: A Brief Discussion. International Journal of Educational Planning & Administration., Volume 1, pp 199-202.
https://www.ripublication.com/ijepa/ijepav1n3_1.pdf

Ministry of Women and Child Development issues Detailed Guidelines for 'Mission Shakti' aimed at Strengthening Interventions for Women Safety, Security and Empowerment. (2022). Ministry of Women and Child Development.
https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1841498

President Grants Assent to Constitution Amendment Providing Women Reservation In Lok Sabha & Assemblies (2023).Live Law.
https://www.livelaw.in/amp/top-stories/president-grants-assent-to-women-reservation-bill-239003

Rajagopal, K. (2023). Supreme Court asks NGO to move govt against Sarpanch-Patism. *The Hindu*.
https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/supreme-court-asks-ngo-to-movegovt-against-sarpanch-patism/article67048843.ece

Women & Men in India 2022 Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation Government of India. (2022). Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation
https://www.mospi.gov.in/publication/women-men-india-2022

SOCIAL FREEDOM OF THE SCHEDULED CASTE WOMEN LIVING IN SLUM AREAS OF GUWAHATI CITY

Mrs. Smita Sharma

Assistant Professor

Department of Education, MNC Balika Mahavidyalaya

Abstract

The slum is a part and parcel of the social system in urban phenomenon. It constitutes one of the most important and persistent problems of an urban life. The slum grows with the growth of the city and becomes an inescapable part of city life. Women are an indispensable co-existence of any society and have more roles to play in the changing dynamics of the society leading to various reforms and transformation in social structures and groups. Being the backbone of any social phenomena, it is very important for women to develop liberal perspectives towards the aspects of society and it is based highly on the freedom of thinking in dimensions of society. Thus, the present study cropped out as a result of ever increasing slums in the Guwahati city, and as these slums consist mostly of Schedule Caste, thereby it leads to the question of What could be the level of social freedom thinking of Scheduled Caste women living in Slum areas of Guwahati city? The objective of the study is to find out the level as well as the difference of social freedom thinking between literate and illiterate SC women living in Slum areas of Guwahati city. The findings of the study show most of the SC women have average level of Social Freedom thinking and there is difference between the literate and illiterate SC women with regard to their Social Freedom of thinking.

Keywords: Social Freedom, Schedule Caste Women and Slum Areas

Introduction

Slums are a universal phenomenon and exist practically in almost all cities across the world. Urbanization accompanied by sustained population growth due to large scale migration leads to mushrooming slum settlement. Among the states of India, Assam locating at the North Eastern part of the country has seen a rapid growth of slum areas. The total population of slum areas is 1, 97,266 and the male and female population is 1, 01,424 and 95,842 (2011 census). The slum population

belonging to Scheduled Cast is 42,358 (as per 2011 census). In Assam, Guwahati is the never centre of all social, cultural, educational and economic activities. In Guwahati the total area covered by the slum population is 5, 82,167(Area sq. m). The slum population is 1, 39,296 and the number of households is 26,090(Guwahati Municipality Corporation).

From the time immemorial women have been subjected to discrimination, violence and sufferings. In the present times with the growth and development of educational and vocational opportunities women have become more conscious of their rights of equality and freedom. The desire for social freedom among women has manifested itself by their protest and revolt against the traditional social norms and taboos which place them in inferior roles and status. Thus an effort was made through the paper to study the social freedom among the scheduled cast women of slum areas.

Concepts

Social Freedom: The term 'Social Freedom' refers to women's desire to be free from social taboos, conventions, rituals and roles which provide them with lower status in society. In the study, the following dimensions of women's social freedom were taken into consideration:

- Freedom from control or interference of parents and husband
- Freedom from social taboos, customs and rituals which impose conventional roles and restrictions on girls/women.
- Freedom concerning sex and marriage.
- Economic freedom and social equality.

Slums: The term 'Slum' came into vogue since the 18th century. It was used to describe squalid housing in densely populated districts of industrial societies. In the present study Slum defines the people living in overcrowded areas in poverty, without proper sanitation facilities, less opportunities of personal development, inaccessible basic amenities etc. People living in slums have bad housing condition which are physically and socially deteriorate situations. Slums are known by different names in various countries like Jhuggi, Jhopri, Bustee, Ahats, Cheri, Katra, Chawl, Zopadpattis, Harlem, Black Belt etc.

Scheduled Castes: The Scheduled Caste is the groups of historically disadvantaged indigenous people in India. The Schedule caste covers about 16.6% of Indian's population (2011 census). The list of Scheduled caste of Assam are- Bansphor, Bhuinmali, Mali, Bania, Dhupia, Dhobi, Dugla, Hira, Jalkeot, Jhalo, Malo, Kaibartta, Jaliya, Lalbegi, Mahara, Mehtar, Bhangi, Muchi, Rishi, Namasudra, Patni and Sutradhar.

Women: The term woman implies the adult human female. In the present study women refers to the women in the age group of 18- 21 years.

Area of the Study

The area of the study is the Guwahati city. The area stands latitudinal from 265' N to 2612' N and longitudinally from 9124' E to 9151' E. It is located to the South-Eastern side of Kamrup district surrounded by Nalbari district in the North, Darrang and Morigaon in the East, Meghalaya in the South and Goalpara and Barpeta district in the West. It covers an area of about 262 square kilometer.

Research Questions of the Study

1) What is the level of Social freedom thinking of Scheduled Caste women living in Slum areas of Guwahati city?

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1) To study the level of Social freedom thinking of Scheduled Caste women living in Slum areas of Guwahati city.
2) To make a comparative study of Social freedom thinking of literate and illiterate Scheduled Caste women living in Slum areas of Guwahati city.

Hypothesis of the Study

1) There exists no significant difference between Social freedom of literate and illiterate Scheduled Caste women living in Slum areas of Guwahati city.

Delimiation of the Study

The study is delimited to the following grounds-

1) The study is delimited to the 5 slum areas of Guwahati city. The 5 wards include Rest Camp Horizon Colony, DhirenparaDatalpara-A, FatasilHarijan Colony, Lakhtokia Railway Line andUjanbajarharijan Colony.
2) For the study, only the women belonging to the age group of 18-21were taken.

Knowledge Gap

Before conducting the study, the researcher reviewed some studies in Indian perspective regarding women's social freedom. From there it was found Kanjiya& Joshi (2013) conducted a study 'A study of Social freedom and depression among women', Kaur (2013) conducted a study 'Study of Women empowerment in Kashmir in relation to social freedom' Sharma (2015) conducted a study 'Socio-Demographic variable as predictors of Women social freedom', Suparna conducted a study on "Gender Discrimination in community Participation for Slum Development Programmes: A Case Study of Slum Women in Silchar Town." Deka (2023) studied on "Deprivation

Characteristics of Slums in Guwahati city of Assam (India): Statistics and Beyond" etc. The review of earlier studies shows that many studies have already

conducted on social freedom of women having their locality, marital status, profession, educational qualification and also with some associated variable like women empowerment, depression etc. The present study has given its concentration on women living in slum area of Assam. From the reviews it was found that few studies were conducted on social freedom of women in the perspective to the slum area of Guwahti. From this point of view, it can be regarded as the knowledge gap between earlier studies and the present study.

Methodology of the Study

The study is based on Descriptive method. There is no readymade data available regarding the Social freedom of women living in slum areas. Therefore, the survey method was found appropriate for the study.

Population and Sample of the Study

All women belonging to the age group of 18-21 years living in the 5 slum area living in Guwahati city are the population of the study. The purposive sampling technique was used and 60 women belonging to the age group of 18-21 years living in slum areas of Guwahati city were selected.

Tools used for Data Collection

For the study a standardized scale entitled 'The Women's Social Freedom Scale' (WSFC) developed by L.I. Bhusan was used as tool for the study.

Analysis and Interpretation

The Level of Social Freedom Thinking of Scheduled Cast Women Living in Slum Areas of Guwahati City

The results of the Objective-1 have shown in the Table 1.0

Table 1.0 : Level of Social freedom thinking of Scheduled Cast Women

Sl.No.	Range of Z Scores	Level of Social freedom thinking	Number	Percentage
1	+2.01 and Above	EXTREMELY HIGH	0	0%
2	+1.26 to +2.00	HIGH	10	16.67%
3	+0.51 to +1.25	ABOVE AVERAGE	8	13.33%
4	−0.50 to +0.50	AVERAGE/MODERATE	28	46.66%
5	−1.25 to -0.51	BELOW AVERAGE	4	6.67%
6	−2.00 to -1.26	LOW	10	16.67%
7	−2.00 and Below	EXTREMLY LOW	0	0%
TOTAL			60	100%

The Table.1.0 has shown that highest number of Women have Average level of social freedom thinking that is 46.66%. Again only 13.33% and 6.67% women have fallen under the category of Above Average and Below Average level of social freedom thinking. It has also found that no girls have Extremely High and Extremely low social freedom thinking. It is interesting to find that 16.67% women have fallen under the category of High and Low level of social freedom thinking.

Comparative Study of Social Freedom Thinking of Literate and Illiterate Scheduled Caste Women Living in Slum Areas of Guwahati city

To examine the difference between Social Freedom thinking of literate and illiterate a null hypothesis was formulated which is as follows-

Null Hypothesis: There exists no significant difference between Social freedom of literate and illiterate Scheduled Caste women living in Slum areas of Guwahati city.

To examine the above hypothesis, t-test was used. The Table 1.1 shows the N, Mean, Standard Deviation, t-value and the level of significance.

Table: 1.1

The Difference between Social freedom thinking of literate and illiterate Scheduled Caste Women

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Significance
Literate	30	10.37	1.67	5.29	Significant
Illiterate	30	7.7	2.20		

The above data reveals that the Mean of the literate and illiterate schedule cast women is 10.37 and 7.7 respectively. The data also shows the Standard Deviation of the literate and illiterate schedule cast women which is 1.67 and 2.20 respectively. The t-value is 5.29 which not significant at the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis 'There exists no significant difference between Social freedom of literate and illiterate Scheduled Caste women living in Slum areas of Guwahati city' is rejected.

Major Findings of the Study

The major findings of the study are discussed as following-

1) Most of the Schedule Caste women living in slum areas (46.66%) Average level of Social Freedom thinking.

2) The study also shows that 13.33% and 6.67% have Above Average and Below Average level of Social freedom thinking.

3) It is interesting to find that 16.67% women have both High and Low level of Social Freedom thinking.

4) It has been found that no Schedule Caste women living in slum areas have Extremely High and Extremely low level of Social Freedom thinking.

5) The study also reveals that the formulated null hypothesis "There exists no significant difference between Social freedom of literate and illiterate Scheduled Caste women living in

Slum areas of Guwahati city' is rejected. It implies there is significant difference between the Social Freedom thinking of literate and illiterate Scheduled Caste women living in Slum areas of Guwahati city.

Suggestions

The suggestions of the study are as follows:

- Education is the only weapon that can fight against the various issues related to women. Proper knowledge regarding women empowerment, social freedom, gender discrimination and women rights must be provided at all ages. This will develop awareness which is a step ahead towards empowerment.

- Parents should play the important role in developing proper social freedom to their children. For this the parents must be provided education through proper channel. This only can develop the feelings of superiority. For this, in the places like slum areas Government should organize classes to develop the mindset of parents.

- The teacher should try to reduce the superstitious belief, social taboos etc. The unscientific traditions of the society have been dominating the girls. So they are not able to set higher aspiration towards education.

Conclusion

Women occupying an important place in the society should be encouraged by providing greater scope of thinking and doing. When we talk about women empowerment, one of the important criteria is freedom of women. Restriction on women at various levels in forms of norms, social customs etc should come to an end. If in the period of globalization this changes do not take place than empowerment and development of nation is in vain.

References:

Agarwala, J. C. (2008). *Landmarks in the History of Modern Indian Education*. New Delhi: Vikash Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.

Kanjia, J.B & Gandharva, J.R. A Study of Social Freedom and Depression Among Women.imjar.2013;Vol-1.

Kaur, K. Study of Women Empowerment in Kashmir in Relation to Social Freedom. Educational Confeb.2013.Vol-2.

Kothari, C.R. (2004). *Research Methodology*: Methods and Techniques. New Delhi: New age International Publishers.

Koul, L.(2001) Methodology of Educational Research. Vikas Publication, New Delhi.

Mangal, S. K. (2014). *Statistics in Psychology and Education*. Delhi: Phi Learning Private Ltd.

Sharma, S. Socio Demographic Variables as Predictors of Women Social Freedom.rjrs,2015.vol4:118-123.

Suparna, D. Gender Discrimination in community Participation for Slum Development Programmes: A Case Study of Slum Women in Silchar Town. irjss. 2015; vol-4(7)

Deka, N. Deprivation Characteristics of Slums in Guwahati city of Assam (India): Statistics and Beyon.ssrn.2023. https://ssrn.com/abstract=4385562

BREAKING BARRIERS AND BUILDING BRIDGES: THE EMPOWERING POTENTIAL OF RESERVATION POLICIES FOR WOMEN

Archana Borah
Teaching Associate
Department of Political Science, Gauhati University

Abstract

The chapter explores the impact of women's reservations in the deeply hierarchical and patriarchal Indian political landscape. It discusses the historical context of gender inequality in India and the importance of women's political involvement in promoting gender equality and empowering women. The Women's Reservation Bill, a significant legislative proposal, is examined as a catalyst for women's empowerment and balanced political representation. The chapter highlights the need for not only reserved quotas but also a transformation in political culture to achieve a truly equitable and sustainable democracy. Ultimately, the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill represents a significant milestone with the potential to inspire global efforts for greater gender equity and inclusive decision-making processes.

Keywords: *Patriarchal, Political representation, Gender inequality, Catalyst, Transformation, Equitable, Sustainable democracy, Milestone, Inclusive*

Introduction

The progress of any society greatly relies on the empowerment of women. Empowerment entails affording people the freedom to make their own decisions, think independently, and realize their full potential as active and equal members of society. In this context, women's political involvement and emancipation are pivotal at all levels (Rather & Mir, 2020). Numerous global leaders and scholars assert that promoting gender equality and empowering women are not just vital but indispensable for sustainable development of a nation (Sharma, 2018).

Political empowerment plays a crucial role in shaping policies that effectively promote gender equality and empower women in both public and private domains. One strategy recommended for achieving this is the implementation of affirmative

action policies that establish quotas for women's representation in policymaking and parliamentary positions (Heredia, 2012). These measures are instrumental in ensuring women's meaningful participation and influence in decision-making processes, thereby advancing their agency and contributing to greater gender equity (Sharma, 2018). By affording women equal opportunities in decision-making roles and fostering a more inclusive and equitable society, women can take strides towards addressing their longstanding issues (Akar and Meshram, 2019).

In the Indian context, the issue of women's representation is again unique due to the country's multicultural, multi-ethnic society, which is divided along lines of caste, class, and various gender orientations. However, what remains consistent is that women are a disadvantaged, marginalized, and excluded group in society (Pal, 2014).

In the context described above, this chapter aims to explore the impact of women's reservations on the empowerment of women within the deeply hierarchical and patriarchal structure of the Indian political landscape.

Women Reservation Bill: A Historic Leap for Equality

In India, despite nearly half of the population being women, there exists a significant gender imbalance and discrimination based on gender continue to persist. Historically, women were often treated unequally, from being seen as goddesses to being relegated to subservient roles. They were denied a voice in many aspects of life and were heavily reliant on male family members (Rather & Mir, 2020). Post-independence, the Indian Constitution explicitly guarantees gender equality and includes provisions for women's rights and protections, with the Preamble, fundamental rights and duties, and directive principles of state policy all emphasizing the importance of gender equality. The Indian Constitution not only guarantees women's equality but also provides states with the authority to enact laws that offer positive discrimination in favour of women.

In spite of the Indian Constitution's prohibition of gender discrimination, women still face significant obstacles to their political engagement (Sasan and Mahajan, 2022). A 2012 study of 3,000 Indian women identified barriers to their involvement in politics, including illiteracy, familial responsibilities, and prejudicial attitudes toward female leadership (Sultana et.al., 2022). Unlike men, women have fewer opportunities to participate in organizations and develop leadership skills since India's political landscape has long been dominated by men, leading to a limited public presence for women (Sultana et.al., 2022). Given this reality, there is a pressing need for robust, policy-driven affirmative action to rectify these disparities and empower those who are disempowered. This is essential for promoting equity and enabling the upliftment of the marginalized segments of society (Shah & Amin, 2017).

In this context, the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill, 2023 (128TH Constitutional Amendment Bill) or Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam which seeks to allocate one-third of all seats in the Lok Sabha, the lower house of the Indian Parliament, as well as in state legislative assemblies, exclusively for women, can be regarded as a significant milestone and a catalyst for women's empowerment throughout India. Advocates of the quota system assert that it is a vital step toward enhancing women's active and impactful engagement in the political arena (Kapur& Narayan, 2020). They argue that such a measure can expedite a process that typically spans generations by ensuring women's substantial representation in governance.

The Women's Reservation Bill, which proposes a one-third quota for women in state legislatures and Parliament, represents a natural extension of what had already been relatively successfully implemented at the grassroots level of local representative bodies following the adoption of the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution in 1992 (Heredia, 2012). These Acts represents a watershed moment, granting women a voice and a platform to break free from their homes and engage in the political and administrative spheres (Prasad, 2013). The reservation of seats and increased political participation of women has had a profound impact on the lives of women who were previously excluded from this arena (Rather & Mir, 2020). The active involvement of women in local self-governing bodies is also a testament to their leadership capabilities and their willingness to invest significant time and effort in these roles. This experience underscores the potential benefits of improved women's political participation, as it equips them to effectively combat the pervasive issues of violence, inequality, and disparities that women continue to face (Akar and Meshram, 2019). The provision of reservation as part of India's inclusion policy stands as a notable example of formal inclusion for historically excluded groups in local government.

Empowering Women: The Imperative of Women Reservation

Women's increased participation in politics is an essential aspect of their empowerment. In fact, political participation serves as a hallmark of democracy and modernization (Chadha, 2014). Feminist viewpoints on the state, democracy, and ideas related to political equality and participation therefore underscore the significance of implementing formal mechanisms to secure women's representation within political institutions (Mili, 2020). These mechanisms are seen as essential for breaking down the significant barriers that obstruct women's engagement in active electoral politics (Sharma, 1998) The Women's Reservation Bill is, thus championed as a means to rectify gender imbalances in politics, prioritize women's issues, and further the cause of gender equality and women's empowerment, while also improving the overall quality of political leadership and decision-making (Akar and Meshram, 2019).

In a democratic system, representation is a vital component for shaping equitable state policies, ensuring the execution of just executive actions, and upholding the integrity of the judicial process. To effectively address these objectives, it is imperative to have a substantial presence of women in these democratic processes and in influential elected positions, where their contributions can make a real impact. Women activists strongly believe that political representation serves as a means to empower women, enabling them to shape and redefine the political agenda and advocate for their interests (Heredia, 2012). Additionally, the women's movement emphasizes the imperative of reforming the prevailing norms of politics and governance, which are currently male-dominated, starting with the promotion of progressive political representation for women (Sharma, 2000). Thus, women's reservations through quotas have the potential to reshape our society and create new avenues for building a more gender inclusive society in the near future (Pal, 2014). Moreover, it is believed that increased access for women will improve the quality of politics as it is anticipated that women's political participation can contribute to cleaner and less corrupt politics, especially in democratic countries like India (Akar and Meshram, 2019).

It is imperative that more women enter the realm of politics, and political parties should actively encourage and support their participation. Women should not be viewed solely as a means to secure votes but should be genuinely empowered to engage in the political process. Women's active involvement in politics is vital for securing their rightful place in society, granting them the agency to shape their destiny, and fostering a genuine and enduring democracy (Sasan and Mahajan, 2022). This increased participation will strengthen individuality, serving as a catalyst for social and economic emancipation while contributing to the resolution of numerous societal issues.

As a whole, women's active participation in politics plays a pivotal role in their holistic liberation and empowerment. Thus, looking at it from a positive perspective, women's reservations have the potential to initiate a cascade of women's empowerment processes. In essence, women's political representation can be seen as a fundamental requirement for women's overall empowerment.

Reservation Revolution: Shattering Patriarchal Politics

To foster democracy and ensure its proper functioning, achieving equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes is essential. The goals of equality, development, and peace cannot be realized without the active involvement of women and the integration of women's perspectives at all levels of decision-making (Chandra, 2016). However, India has made limited progress in addressing these imbalances, with women currently holding only

15.2% of parliamentary seats and 9% of state legislative assembly seats on an average (prsindia.org). Women are underrepresented in legislative bodies and

lack active participation in the formulation of national laws, despite India being one of the first democratic nations to grant women the right to vote (Rather & Mir, 2020).

The limited presence of women in the internal hierarchy of political parties, the absence of adequate provisions to facilitate women's involvement in party activities, and a prevailing reluctance to embrace the principles of gender parity and partnership in politics are thus evident in the low representation of women in parliament and state assemblies (Chandra, 2016). Women's units established within parties in the 1970s are often considered subsidiary or peripheral to the party's core structure, with their activities primarily focused on social events, campaign initiatives, and mobilizing women to support the party in power (Sharma, 1998).

The growing concern regarding the insufficient representation of women in political institutions is now understood as a consequence of gendered spaces and opportunity structures. Gender equity in Indian society runs counter to the prevailing grain of our deeply rooted patriarchal traditions, which often openly or discreetly oppose any changes that question their dominance (Haynes et.al, 1992). It is only through a robust and determined political movement for gender equity that we can effectively challenge the existing male-dominated landscape of electoral politics (Heredia, 2012). Women's participation is therefore recognized as essential not only for the proper functioning of democracy but also for women's capacity to advocate for their rights and confront the patriarchal ideologies and hierarchies that perpetuate their subordination (Sharma, 1998). Much like the situation with caste, the implementation of reserved quotas for women in the public sphere represents a clear and straightforward manifestation of affirmative action. Just as caste quotas challenge the entrenched caste hierarchies, women's quotas pose a challenge to dominant patriarchal systems (Heredia, 2012).

Uma Bharati (BJP) emphasizes that, in the absence of constitutional mandates, men may not willingly cede ground to women. This sentiment is echoed by Pramila Dandavate (Janata Dal) and Vimala Ranadive (Communist Party), highlighting how politics and patriarchal structures often work in tandem to maintain the subordination of women, regardless of their differing political ideologies (Narasimhan, 2002). Thus, they are of the opinion that in a predominantly male-dominated society like India, women's quotas have the potential to act as a catalyst for transformative change.

Furthermore, Indian party politics, particularly within a multi-party democratic system, is marked by political institutions that often consolidate support based on caste, religious, and ethnic affiliations, leading to the emergence of novel political fault lines that do not always align with traditional ideological divisions (Sharma, 2000). The intricacies of coalition politics have exposed their inherent contradictions, as electoral calculations may not always accommodate the genuine concerns of women within the political agenda, due to the parties' primary focus on their own

survival. In a multi-party democracy where the "numbers game" significantly influences the formation of governments, the practical selection of so-called "winning candidates" can work against women, despite the lip service paid to gender equality in party manifestos (Sharma, 2000). In the present-day context, significant changes have occurred and are ongoing, shaping new social realities. However, realizing the goal of political participation in its true sense still requires considerable progress. Today, therefore it is essential to unite and demand the quick implementation of the much-awaited Women's Reservation Bill to ensure fair representation.

Reservations, often seen as a means of offering backdoor entry to the less capable, in fact, serve as a tool for providing protective discrimination to the vulnerable, including women. This tool is believed to have the potential to bring about historical leaps and jump-start progress towards gender equality and inclusivity in political decision-making processes (Pal, 2014). These measures should be welcomed as a way to uplift less fortunate segments of society, who require additional support, attention, and space for growth due to their unique circumstances. In the realm of politics, traditionally dominated by men, allocating seats to women play a pivotal role in elevating their voices and improving their status. It is the most effective approach to establish women in an equitable position, granting them rightful representation and a strong foothold in a predominantly patriarchal social structure (Sasan and Mahajan, 2022).

Women constitute 50% of the population in our nation, and in the world's largest democracy, it is our collective responsibility to support and empower them. The journey towards achieving gender equality and balanced representation in Indian politics has involved multiple efforts and significant challenges. Women's reservation at the grassroots level was a crucial initial step, but it became apparent that additional interventions were necessary to ensure equal representation in the Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies (Sasan and Mahajan, 2022). The realization of the Women's Reservation Bill would mean a greater number of female MPs in Parliament and female MLAs in state assemblies, thereby contributing to a more balanced and equitable political landscape.

Conclusion

Political representation serves as a fundamental requirement in a liberal democracy (Heredia, 2012). The implementation of reservation policy aims to address the exclusion of women resulting from the inequitable social structures embedded within the political process which is widely accepted as a fair and legitimate justification for the introduction of reserved quotas in legislatures and Parliament. While the category of women is diverse, they universally face discrimination and deprivation in their families and society (Heredia, 2012). Consequently, their right to representation is undeniable and must not be contested.

The passage of the Women's Reservation Bill is not merely a significant milestone for India; it also carries the potential to serve as a catalyst for women's empowerment on a global scale (Akar and Meshram, 2019). It sets a remarkable precedent for promoting gender equality and women's participation in politics, showcasing India's commitment to this cause. This legislation can inspire and encourage similar endeavors worldwide, ultimately fostering greater gender equity and empowering women to play pivotal roles in decision-making processes (Akar and Meshram, 2019). Moreover, women's liberation is not solely for the benefit of women but promises to liberate society as a whole, emancipating men from their patriarchal roles and all individuals from hierarchical structures, leading us toward a more egalitarian society, a more representative democracy, and a more inclusive citizenship (Heredia, 2012).

However, reserved quotas alone are not sufficient to achieve equity and equality for women. They are necessary but not exclusive. Effective representation hinges not only on quantity but also on quality. In fact, Gandhi regarded political and legal equality as merely the initial step, stating that "Women must have the right to vote and an equal legal status. However, the real challenge begins when women start to influence the political discourse of the nation." This perspective highlights the need for not just formal rights but also active participation and influence in the political arena to achieve true gender equality. Reserved quotas should therefore align with the electoral system and be supplemented with other initiatives, such as consciousness-raising, capacity building, and fostering gender-sensitive environments. These changes can be fostered through comprehensive political education and gender sensitization.Ultimately, a transformation in a country's political culture is essential to bring more women into the political arena over the long term which will foster a truly equitable and sustainable democracy.

References

AKAR, A., & MESHRAM, M. P. (2019). Power and representation: Women Reservation Bill. *Pro Bono India*.

Chadha, A. (2014). Political participation of women: A case study in India. *OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development*, 7(02), 91-108.

Chandra, S. (2016). Empowering Women through Political Representation in India. *Research Gate*.

Haynes, D. E., & Prakash, G. (Eds.). (1992). *Contesting power: Resistance and everyday social relations in South Asia*. Univ of California Press.

Heredia, R. (2012). Holding up Half the Sky: Reservations for Women in India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 51-60.

Kapur, R., & Narayan, S. (2020). Women Empowerment in India: More needs to be done. *ISAS Insights*, 628, 1-5.

Mili, S. Political Reservation and Empowerment of Women in India: An Analysis.

Narasimhan, S. (2002). Gender, class, and caste schisms in affirmative action policies: The Curious case of India's women's reservation bill. *Feminist Economics*, 8(2), 183-190.

Pal, S. (2014). Politics of Women's Reservation in India. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(3), 118-122.

Prasad, D. (2013). Representation through reservation: Moving towards inclusive governance. *Political Sci*, 2, 478-480.

Rather, S., & Mir, A. A. (2020). Reservation Policies and Women Empowerment in India: An Overview.

Sasan, N. K., & Mahajan, P. (2022). Empowerment of women and reservation in Indian politics: A viewpoint. *DME Journal of Law*, 3(01).

Shah, A. R., & Amin, P. M. Women, Inequality and Reservation Debate in India. *Sr. No Article Author Page No. 1 Editorial 1 2 Women's Role in Traditional Agrarian Society of Kashmir: A Socio-Historical Perspective*, 53.

Sharma, K. (1998). Power vs. representation: feminist dilemmas, ambivalent state and the debate on reservation for women in India.

Sharma, K. (2000). Power and representation: Reservation for women in India. *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, 6(1), 47-87.

Sharma, R. Women Empowerment by Reservation Policy; Volume 1, Issue 2, December 2018

Sultana, N. M., Sakthi, D. K., & Abdulraheem, D. A. (2022). Women's political representation and exclusion in India: an overview. *Int J Innovat Sci Res Technol*, 7(4), 683-685.

WOMEN TRAFFICKING AND VIOLATION OF WOMEN RIGHTS IN ASSAM

Monoranjan Neog
Research Scholar
North Lakhimpur College (Autonomous)

Abstract

Women trafficking is one of the most heinous transnational organised crimes of contemporary period. Every country has been a victim of this crime. India has also been a major hotspot of women trafficking. In India Assam has been emerging as a hotspot of women trafficking. Girls and women from various districts have been continuously trafficked to outside states. The socio economic conditions of the state are responsible factor of the trafficking. Despite the stern action by the competent authority trafficking has been continuing. All the stakeholders have to play a strong role to combat this issue.

Keywords: *Women, Trafficking, Assam*

Introduction

Assam is a North Eastern state of Indian union. Surrounding by hills & foreign countries, landscape of the state is diverse among the Indian states. The state is also diverse in terms of societal structure. Different groups of people belonging to different caste, religious groups, linguistic groups, tribes are the inhabitants of the state. The state is surrounded on three sides, that is, the north, east and south by hills and mountains and to the west it merges with west Bengal and Bangladesh plains. Assam along with the rest of North East India is a transitional zone between South Asia and South East Asia. Politically Assam is surrounded by two foreign countries Bangladesh and Bhutan and seven North East states. The total land surface of Assam is 78,438 sq km.(Taher & Ahmed 2005 pp 1-2)

The Assamese society is patriarchal in nature. In patriarchal society position of women are considered inferior to man & also treated as second class citizen. Inspite of patriarchal nature of society women in Assam enjoy dignity and good position in the society over the century, compared to rest of the country.

Over the years' women in Assam has been facing various problems in their life. Even their survival has been threatened. The dignity and status of the women has been severely affected. Women have been victim of lots of issues. After independence of the country, despite the various noble initiatives women have been suffering lots of serious issues affecting their sustenance. One such issue is trafficking of women, which includes both girls and adult women. Over the last few decades trafficking of women has been single major factor which has been degenerating the status and dignity of the women in Assam.

So trafficking of women has been a major factor resulting in violation of women rights in Assam. Socio-economic and political rights of women have been continuously violated due to the menace of trafficking.

Objectives

The objectives of the paper are-
i. To study the Causes of trafficking in Assam.
ii. To study the trafficking induced women rights violation

Merthodology

To get insights of the subject matter, the analytical and descriptive method have been used in the study. The study is based on the secondary sources of data obtained from books, journals, reports, newspapers etc.

Women Trafficking in Assam

According to Oxford dictionary "Trafficking means deal in something especially illegally. Human trafficking implies trafficking in persons, is a crime that involves compelling or coercing a person to provide labour or services, or to engage in commercial sex acts. The coercion can be subtle or overt, physical or psychological."(http://www.justice.gov/humantraffciking/what-ishuman-trafficking)

On the other hand, human trafficking can be considered as the acquisition of people by improper means such as force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them. Human trafficking is not a seldom committed crime. It is a serious crime of permanent nature which is rampant and every state and country is struggling to cope with this problem. It is the modern day form of slavery, threatening the dignity and security of millions of people across the globe. It has been estimated that through Human trafficking almost twelve million persons are victimized and it is more than thirty two billion dollar industry. (Mishra 2013, p 1)

According to Palermo protocol, the UN protocol dealing with the issue of trafficking, defines human trafficking as the recruitment, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons, by means of the threat, or use of force, or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position

of vulnerability or the giving or receiving payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. The exploitation shall include sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery, servitude, or removal of organ. (Mishra 2013, pp2-3)

Trafficking of women is a major issue resulting in being crimes committed in India. Within India, North-eastern states have been becoming hotspot for women trafficking over the years. In the Northeast, Assam, Nagaland, and Manipur form major source points of sex trafficking. Assam is a major source and transit point in India. (Ray 2015).

There are numerous factors of trafficking. These factors can be categorised as. (Mishra 2013, p 6)

    i. Push factor

    ii. Pull factor

Push factors are the factors exiting at the point of origin hence it is known as origin based factors. Other hand pull factors are the factors at the place of destination.

Both the push and pull factors can be discussed as follows-

Push Factors:

There are wide ranges of push factors in Assam. Analyses of these factors are given below-

Social factors: There are two social factors related to women trafficking, one is caste and class structure, other is gender-based discrimination. There are division in the society as upper caste and lower caste. This discrimination of certain castes is one of the causes of trafficking in India. Even caste system convinced many Indians to accept that trafficking of low caste members is fact of like, rather than a flawed tradition. (Mishra 2013,Pp 7-8)

Again gender based discrimination is another social factors related to trafficking. So traffickers consider women as a soft target to be trafficked. The girl child of poor parents is sold off as they are commoditized by virtue of their high demand in market for sex, forced labour, entertainment etc. it is believed that more than sixty percent of girls who are trafficked for sexual exploitation are victims of forced labour and vice versa. Hence it is more lucrative to traffic a female than a male.

Economic factors: Rural areas in Assam are underdeveloped, lack of employment opportunity, minimal economic growth opportunities and poverty makes the weaker sections vulnerable hence traffickers grab the opportunity of poor economic conditions. According to a report girl of many tea garden areas in Sonitpur district has become hotspot for human trafficking gangs. Among the reasons of trafficking poverty has been cited as one of the major causes. (http://www.assamtribune.com/

amp/human-traffckiers-preying-on-girls-of-sonitpur-tes 15-92010.) Again majority of women are unemployed. Women are less educated and less skilful or unskilled compared to men. So they have found difficulty in get a good job. As a result the traffickers convinced them that outside the state they would be provided good job with high salary hence the women fall in the trap of traffickers. A news published in Assam tribune cited that twelve people including two women were rescued who were promised of employment in private factories in New Delhi (http://www.google.com/amp/s/assamtribune.com/amp/assam/human-traffickingracket-busted-in-assam-133919 Nov 14, 2021)

Domestic violence: Regarding women trafficking in Assam another push factors is domestic violence in the household. After marriage a woman faces serious discrimination and oppression due to domestic violence. The husband demands dowry from the wife's house and torture the wife brutally. According to report reported cases of domestic violence have been continuously increasing between 2009-2019. In the four years between 2015-16 to 2019-20 the proportion of wives who reported violence by husbands increased from 24.5% to 32% in Assam. As a result the victims often try to leave their home and these conditions of women are utilized by the traffickers. The traffickers lure the victim of domestic violence to provide employment opportunity and better lives. As aresult, victims fall in to the trap of traffickers. (http://www.google.com/amp/s/www.indiaspend.com/amp/assam/assam-worst-state-forviolence-agaisnt-women-gets-a-poll-manifesto-739331)

Illiteracy: Most of the victims of human trafficking is generally illiterate or semi literate. Who have lack of knowledge or little knowledge about the evils of human trafficking. The victims fall easily in the trap of traffickers as the traffickers lure them to provide better employment opportunity and better living standard. So the victims accept the offer of traffickers because the economic conditions of the victims are pathetic or they belong to poor family. In Assam the traffickers target the women belonging to Adivasi community or tea garden labourers. The tea garden labourers have limited access to education hence number of drop outs or illiterate are higher among them. With illiteracy, alcoholism thrives among the tea garden community resulting in ill health and domestic abuse. Asa result this makes for a perfect setting for traffickers. Many unsuspecting children, especially minor girls are being lured in large numbers from tea gardens of Assam into bonded labour, sexual exploitation, and even forced marriage. (http://www.easternpanoroma.com)

Natural Disaster: Flood is a major natural disaster which occurs annually in Assam. After floods human trafficking networks become highly active in Assam. The traffickers engage locals to detect vulnerable targets and lure them with jobs, money or marriage. As a result, victims of floods become victims of trafficking. Regarding the role of flood in trafficking the chairperson of Impulse NGO network Hasina Kharbhih commented that "Assam is affected by floods every year and

we always see the impact of natural calamities on migration which is one way of increasing human trafficking." (http://www.eastmojo.com/assam/2020/09/16/how-floods-and-migration-in-assamlink-to-human-traffcking)

On the other hand, unnatural elements like ethnic clashes and insurgency are some of the factors which also create the opportunity for traffickers. In Assam ethnic conflict has been a common phenomenon in the past decades. Hence Women in Assam become more vulnerable.

Pull factors are also responsible for women trafficking. There are various pull factors contributing to trafficking. These pull factors include-

  i. Communication or mode of transport,

  ii. Urbanisation

  iii. Industrialisation,

  iv. Technological advancement etc.

Due to the improved means of communication system it becomes very easy in the movement of people within the country or around the world. As a result traffickers grab the opportunity to trafficking women very easily to the final destination. Women have been continuously trafficking to the other parts of India through the railways and airways. News published in Assam Tribune cited that twelve (12) people including two(2) women were rescued at Paltan bazaar railway station who were promised of employment in private factories in New Delhi. (http://www.google.com/amp/s/assamtribune.com/amp/assam/human-trafficking-racket-bustedin-assam-13391914-11-2021 05:46GMTs)Urbanisation has been rapidly increasing in India. Growing urbanisation provides employment opportunity. As a result, people from remote areas or rural areas have moved to urban areas in search of employment. So traffickers also try to attract saying that they would be provided with employment opportunity. Hence the trafficking becomes very easy.

Industrialisation has been rapidly increasing in India. Industrialisation provides employment opportunity to the people. So the women who remain in search of jobs in industrial areas are easily trapped by the traffickers as most of the people are unaware about how to get a job in industry. Basically there are high demands of unskilled labourers outside Assam. Hence women in Assam are easily trapped by the traffickers.

Besides these push and pull factors personal factors are there which are also responsible for trafficking of persons. Regarding personal factors illiteracy, lack of awareness and information are more prone to trafficking. Women with disabilities are an easy catch for traffickers. A dysfunctional family, fragile relationship, marital discord, physical abuse, sexual abuse, drug use, family pressures, gender discrimination, desertion by husbands makes women vulnerable to trafficking.

On the other-hand some other factors like inefficient laws, poor enforcement, ineffective penalties, minimal chances of prosecution, the relatively low risks

involved, corruption and complacency, poor visibility and less debate on the issue, the lack of political will to execute policies and provide adequate services for victims play a significant role in trafficking of women.

Trafficking and violation of women rights

Violation of women's human rights or women rights is a serious issue of global concern. Over the years' women have been continuously facing obstacles to enjoy their rights as a human being. Women rights refer to the rights possessed by women and girls of all ages, who may be institutionalised, ignored or suppressed by law, custom, and behaviour in a particular society. Women rights include, right to vote, right to hold public office, right to work, right to fair wages or equal pay, right to own property, right to education, right to serve in the military, right to enter into legal contacts and right to exercise martial, parental and religious rights.

Trafficking is a major cause behind the violation of women rights in Assam. Trafficking of women is a serious threat to their dignity and rights. Trafficking causes untold miseries as it violates the rights and dignity of the trafficked victim. The women who become the victim of trafficking were unable to enjoy various rights like right to life, right to freedom, right to liberty, right to free speech and expression, right to education, right to live with dignity, right to equal wages, right to health, right to privacy, right to self-determination, right to legal remedies, right to marry grievance etc. The trafficked women are forced to live their life like the slave. The victims of trafficking suffer extreme physical and mental torture. This includes rape, forced abortions, forced prostitution, physical torture, non-accessibility to adequate meal, forced to live in an unhygienic condition and use as a machine to give birth to children.

Conclusion

Women trafficking are one of the major crimes of contemporary times. Trafficking not only violates women's right but also contributes to the loss of human dignity. This has become a matter of serious national and international concern. In India, Assam has become a major hotspot of trafficking of women in recent years. Various Initiatives have been taking by both the government and non-government level to combat the menace of women trafficking; however, these initiatives are unable to eliminate the trafficking in women. So necessary steps should be taken to resolve the structural problems i.e. poverty alleviation, unemployment problems, illiteracy etc. The urgent requirement to combat trafficking is to create awareness campaign among the public about human trafficking as well as women trafficking. The victims of trafficking can be included in the awareness programme. They can be motivated to tell their story so that society can understand the issue of trafficking and to prevent future occurrences. At the same time there is a need of co-ordination between the law enforcement agency and the public.

References:

Taher M & Ahmed (2005), Assam A geographical profile, Mani Manik Prakash, Guwahati, first edition : December.

Ray S. (2015) "Of Vulnerability and Coercion: a study of Sex Trafficking in Assam"published by *Sociological Bulletin*. Vol-64. No.3 Pp.305-324. Retrived from http://www.researchgate.net/publication/314832415-ofvulnerability-and-sextraffcking-and-coercion-A-Study-of-Sex-Trafficking-in-Assam

Mishra V.(ed) (2013) Human Trafficking: Stakeholders' Perspective, Sage Publications India, Delhi.

EDUCATION:
A TOOL FOR EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN

Mitumani Rabha[1]
Assistant Professor (Contractual)
Department of Education, Chhaygaon College
Hiyashree Parasar[2]
Assistant Professor (Contractual)
Department of Education, Chhaygaon College

Abstract

The present paper is an attempt to analyze the reality of women empowerment in India using various indicators based on data from secondary source itself. The study reveals that women in India are relatively disempowered and they enjoy somewhat lower status in society than that of men in spite of many efforts undertaken by government of India. The study concludes with an observation that access to education and employment are only the enabling factors of empowerment. Achievement towards the goal, however, depends largely on the changing attitude of the people towards gender equality, increasing access to education. Gender discrimination still persists in India and lot more needs to be done in the field of women's education and empowering women in India. Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom for development of women. Education is a milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional roles and change their lives. This Paper seeks to highlight various dimensions of empowerment of women through education.

Introduction

Rabindra Nath Tagore rightly opined, "The widest road leading to the solution of all our problems is education." The Indian Educational Council (IEC) also emphasizes, "For full development of our resources, the impressionable years of infancy, the education of women is of even greater importance than that of man ". Women play a crucial role in development. Investing more in women's health helps in building peaceful and productive societies. Education is considered as a basic requirement and a fundamental right for the citizens of any nation. It is a powerful tool for reducing inequality as it can give people the ability to become independent.

Women Empowerment is a global issue and discussion on women's political rights are at the fore front of many formal and informal campaigns worldwide. Since women constitute another wheel of the society they are equally responsible for bringing social change. Education is regarded as an important milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to face the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their lives. Education of women is the most powerful tool for changing their position in the society. Still large womenfolk of our country are illiterate, backward, weak, and exploited. India can become a developed nation only if women contribute to the best of her ability which is possible when she is educated and empowered. The Government of India has contrived a few plans to advance schooling among women, an idea that India's lacks. A few Government plans like Beti Bachao, and Beti Padhao has seen good progress of late. 21st century education is about giving students the skills they need to succeed in this new world, and helping them grow the confidence to practice those skills. With so much information readily available to them, 21st century skills focus more on making sense of that information, sharing and using it in smart ways. Empowerment through education is a great way to empower individuals. It is not just about giving the information, but also about learning from them. Empowering women is vital to improving their chances of success. Empowering them to take control of their own experiences can increase their motivation, self-esteem, and success. Pioneering American Librarian John Cotton Dana once said, "He who dares to teach must never cease to learn." Empowering students through education is a powerful way to make a difference in the world. Keeping in view the empowerment of Women, role of Education is one of the most powerful levers for upward social mobility. It is the key to breaking free from poverty.

Concept of Women's Empowerment:

Empowerment is a term widely used for the ability to take rational decision and believe in self -worth. Empowering women implies enabling them to find ways so that they can fight with the imbalances of the society and thereby participate equally in the development. An empowered woman is Self-made and value her self-respect and confident in recognizing her strength. In addition, improving the status of women also enhances their decision-making capacity in all spheres of life, especially in the area of sexuality and reproduction. This, in turn, is essential for the long- term success of population programmes. Women's empowerment is valuable for the development and advancement of the family, community as well as the nation.

Rural women are mainly for social, economic and environment transformation for the 'New India' 21st century. In India, Agriculture employs about 75 percent of rural women. Empowering and mainstreaming rural women workforce in agriculture, can bring paradigm shift towards economic growth. It will enhance

food and nutrition, security, poverty and hunger. It's a strategy for achieving Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 itself. Inspite of women's substantial contribution in all walks of life, and hence growth in the national economy, their role is majorly ignored or remains unnoticed. The United Nation commission on status of women observed that women who contribute half of the world 's population, perform two thirds of the world 's work, receive one tenth of its income and own less than one hundredth of its property itself. The degree of exploitation, instead of declining is on the rise especially in rural areas.

The census report (2011) revealed percentage of women literate and now, if we consider female literacy rate in India, then it is lower than the male literacy rate as many parents do not allow their female children to go to schools. They are married off at a young age instead. Though child marriage has been decreasing, it still happens. Many families, especially in rural areas believe that having a male child is better than having a baby girl. So the male child gets all the benefits. Today, the female literacy level according to the Literacy Rate 2011 census are 65.46% where the male literacy rate is over 80%. The literacy rate in India has always been a matter of concern but many NGO initiatives and government ads, campaigns and programs are being held to spread awareness amongst people about the importance of literacy. The government has made strict rules for female rights to equality. In India, literacy rate has shown significant rise in the past decade generally, most educated women live in urban areas and they get all the facilities for their upliftment and advancement. Rural Women, on the other hand, are subject to various social hazards which block their progress. Female Literacy Rate in India (2010-2021, %)In 2010, was 80.35%. With time eventually, the rate has increased. Between 2010-2021, the female literacy rate in India has increased by 14.4%. In 2021, the rate was 91.95%.

Development of Social, Constitutional, Economic and Educational position of Rural Women in India

The rural women are still shackled by tradition, customs, age-old superstitions and beliefs. Total household work generating income, and overall well-being of family and community are well managed by rural women. But rural women and girls regularly confront the problem of social exclusion, and restriction from fully enjoying their human rights, and suffer from health disparity. They remain suppressed by their husbands, spent most of their time in household chores. In the lower socio-economic level of the society, women were engaged in more hazardous manual labour than men. In the agricultural sector, more than half the labourers are women. Still, it is unfortunate that contributions of women are not given recognition and men are considered as bread-winners of the household. The rural women possess the traits of diligence and resourcefulness. They render a whole-hearted contribution in the implementation of various tasks and activities. In spite of their meticulousness, their work is lesser paid outside and unpaid within the

house. In various employment settings, their wage is less as compared to men, for the implementation of similar job duties. These aspects signify that they are considered inferior to men.

Equality (Article 14), No discrimination by the State Authority (Article 15(1)),Equality of opportunity (Article 16) Equal pay for equal work in every term (Article 39(d)) permits the state to take extra precautions for women and children (Article 15(3)) and forbids actions that are demeaning to women's dignity (article 51(A)(e)). It also permits the provision of safe and humane working conditions and maternity care throughout the State (Article42). Although the Indian constitution guarantees women the same rights as men, powerful patriarchal traditions continue because of longstanding social norms that still apply to women today.

Rural women are key agents for development. They play a catalytic role towards achievement of transformational economic, environmental and social changes required for sustainable development. Women's economic empowerment is the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognize the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth. Women's economic empowerment increases women's access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, property and other productive assets, skill development and market information. Rural women are increasingly participating in economic activity. The survey notes the noticeable rise in Rural Female Labour Force Participation Rate from 19.7 per cent in 2018-19 to 27.7 per cent in 2020-21.At present, there are 432 million women of working-age in India, out of which 343 million are employed in the unorganized sector. Indian organisations have witnessed a remarkable 26 per cent representation of women within the workforce in 2023, a significant increase from 21 per cent in 2021.

Educating and empowering women can help to build a progressive family, society and nation. An educated woman can help to uplift many lives. Therefore, Rural India requires to empower women by building education and employment opportunities for them. As pandemic arrived in the year 2020, all educational institutes moved to digital mode of learning. E-learning has become an alternative to traditional methods of learning. Digital education is more accessible and inexpensive compared to traditional learning. Students can access their learning resources from the comfort of their homes.

Factors responsible for poor female literacy:

1. Lack of awareness on education
2. Family economic situation and society discrimination
3. Occupation of women in domestic chores
4. Household work responsibility in tribal, rural and slum areas of the nation,
5. Government officials, policy makers, politicians, etc. of our country have neither political will nor conviction for the empowerment of women.

Education: A Tool for women empowerment:

Earning improve their own standard of living, and support their families itself. It is the catalyst for social, political, and economic participation, enabling women to engage in dialogue, assert their rights, and challenge gender norms, the parameters of which are:

1. Develop self-esteem and confidence of women for empowerment in improving capacity.

2. Developing ability to think critically and motivate working capacity

3. Education is milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to responds to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life.

4. Developing gender equally participation

5. They are able to make financial decisions on their own and become financially independent.

6. Education helps the women in improving frequently every working sector.

Suggestion for improving of women's Empowerment:

Women's education has assumed special significance itself in the context of the country 's planned development. Education enables women to acquire basic skills and abilities and foster a value system which is conducive to raising their status in herself and society. Here are–

1. Rural women should be careful empowered though literacy rate measures, vocational training and skills development. There is a need for strict implementation of statutes that emphasise on women empowerment through education.

2. Training in leadership development among the rural women is also quite necessary. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Andolan has been launched for creating awareness among the people to educate all girl children in the country.

3. Empowerment of rural women should be the priority area of non-formal, adult and continuing education program.

4. If ICT (Information and communication technology)are to become a means for improved economic conditions, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas, ICT policy and programs must address the needs of women and the poor in general.

5. Women's participation must be encouraged in the conservation of the environment and the control of environmental degradation. Environmental education should be encouraged towards women in rural areas.

6. Encourage your every woman to speak up and make sure they know the value of their opinions, so that they're never scared to use their voice.

7. One of the participating nurses said that all school education must be made coeducational, as this helps children interact with the opposite gender and form healthy relationships, a requisite for gender equality

8. Invest in women's organizations and businesses. NGOs working for the empowerment of women need to take interventions on livelihood development options related to the market and value chain.

9. Invest in women's organizations and businesses. Grassroots women's organizations and movements are underfunded and under attack around the world.

10. Enhancing women's uptake of e-services. Although most of the existing eservices are useful to women, women-focused information is minimal.

The special literature for rural women should be based on the following points:

1. Becoming awareness of social position specifically in home and family life.

2. Empowerment and social responsibilities and home management system training.

3. ICTs in women empowerment and uses dynamic media.

4. Political empowerment and decision -making procedure.

5. Awareness among maternal and childcare activities.

6. Developing every woman every child and global movement.

7. Enrolment of women in higher education in India.

8. Women Administrators and their position in Indian Universities and colleges.

9. Awareness among Rights and duties as a citizen.

10. Participation in local welfare association activities and social platform.

References:

Dr. Bora Deepali : Women empowerment present and the way forward Guwahati, Assam

Pati J. C., Saho RK, Dash Hariballav : Women Education Emerging Issues and Rethinking , New Delhi

Bakshi R.K : Challenges of women empowerment, Delhi

Aggarwal, Usha, Indian Women Education and Development, Ambala

Dutta, S. Kr. & Ghosh, Dillip Kr , Empowering Rural Women, New Delhi

Krishnaswami, O. (2012)." Research Methodology and Statistical Analysis". Himalaya Publishing House.

WOMEN AND THE SPACE OF ART

Dr. Nayak Amritanand
Assistant Professor
Department of Art Education, Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan
Teachers' Training & Research Institute
Chamata, Nalbari, Assam

Abstract

Art is a human product, whatever the form or medium. Besides this human agency, two other aspects are integral to it: suggestively meaningful pattern and an aura of 'beauty'. But what is the role/place of women in the space of art? Is it equitable with that of men? On closer scrutiny it is found that the artistic space is dominated by men in various ways that issue from patriarchal attitude and practices. My paper intends to study this phenomenon taking Fine Arts/Visual Arts as the focus.

Keywords: *Art, Human agency, Medium, Beauty, Patriarchy*

Introduction

Art, derived from Latin '*ars*', originally means a skilful activity or product thereof. This skill involved imitation (mimesis) of ideas or natural reality to produce or create useful, and later also pleasing objects. It must be noted that the initial emphasis on utility gets diluted, and shifted to the aspect of pleasing which slowly but steadily evolves into an idea of beauty resulting in an elaborate area of study called 'Aesthetics'. In the process a clear binary of 'art' and 'nature'/ 'reality' comes into being with the concept of 'art' suffering from or endowed with an incompleteness or lack vis-à-vis reality. Emphasis on this element of beauty grows to overcome this sense of lack and to make it desirable. In visual arts this shift becomes prominent after the invention of photography in the middle of the 19th century. In the Indian context, the Sanskrit word '*Kala*' also has the meaning of both 'skill' and 'incompleteness', broadly corresponding to the Greek-Latin mimetic paradigm. Globally, art, especially visual art, has grown more and more idea centric, theory-driven. The paper tries to understand the presence/absence of women in this space of art.

We know that women in all ages have been more oriented towards innovation and cleanliness because of biological, reproductive and existential necessity. The necessity of bearing children, providing for them and raising them, has taught them skills and rendered them artistic. The history of home decorations, weaving, preparing food, singing, dancing, jewellery making etc., all bear witness to this. The involvement of women in the production of art forms is clearly visible in the heritage of all tribal/indigenous communities. As proof we may refer to Saura, Warli and other art forms of our country. But in the sphere of historical records and documents, disbursement of recognition and rewards, names of female artists and their contributions have usually taken back seats. They have been rendered invisible and marginalized in different ways emanating from mainly patriarchal orientation of the society.

The significant means for erasure of female artists is dropping their names from pages of 'history'. One patriarchal technique is men closing their eyes to female artists in a rather solipsistic manner; the other is to refer to them as a group, a class or herd so that their solo, individual personalities and contributions get overwhelmed and disappear. We have two classic examples harbouring infliction of invisibility on female artists: one, The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, And Architects (Vasari, 1550, 2006) and The Story of Art (Gombrich, 1950, 2017). In Vasari there is mention of only four female artists among many male artists. What is even more surprising and shocking is the fact that Gombrich, who comes nearly four hundred years after Vasari, does not include even one female artist in his 'hisstory'. In a later edition this 'oversight' is rectified with magnanimity by the inclusion of just one female artist!

Were women really so sterile that they could not match the profound fertility of men, or it was the patriarchal male canon choking their creativity and visibility? This has been studied and the male bias has been exposed in The Story of Art Without Men (Hessel, 2022), a play on Gombrich's title and rebuttal of his assumptions. On the basis of a survey of last 500 years, she has subverted this incomplete, biased history of art, by making female artists visible, and thus presenting 'her-story' of art. A few lines from the review of this work make the scenario and Hessel's argument clear: " Removing the 'clamour of men' let this book find the buried talents, retell the chronology of famous art movements with female names. Women were simply not seen as artists in Renaissance Europe, the few women who broke into the art world did it through powerful men and were usually the daughters of male artists or wealthy patrons. Women were not allowed into art academies or to observe human anatomies until the 19th century. They got around it, painting still lives and domestic scenes ... .And yet, most of these remarkable artists are barely known; their names were often changed to sell the art work. Even in their time, they were seen as mere wives, muses, models and adjuncts to famous men. Big male artists have borrowed freely from female peers, but even

as the Klints, Duchamps and Mondrians are remembered, the women before are forgotten."(Mind Field, 2023) The same patriarchal exclusion has severely restricted the entry/access of female artists into galleries, museums and art collectors. Here they are hopelessly outnumbered by male artists.

But the irony of the female situation is depressingly glaring. While art is considered soft, fragile, pleasing—a feminine product—and hence given 'appropriate' label of 'fine' by the male ego-driven ethos, often the incentives due to the female artists have been denied to them, and snatched away rather brazenly by the patriarchal brotherhood. On the other hand, the fine art- craft dichotomy reduces much of the products by female artists to the status of craft considered undeserving of public display and appreciation. (Corsmeyer et al, 2021).

Female artists of our country and region have become similar victims of patriarchal neglect and discrimination. Take the case of Assam, the land of Chitralekha, the muse of art(painting), and Goddess Kamakshya, the symbolic embodiment of *shakti*, feminine energy. We do not know if there were any female artist prior to Prajna Das and Hemangini Bordoloi who lived in the early decades of the 20th century. There is no mention of them or they have been herded into oblivion. Through the medieval period till the mid-19th century Assam produced hundreds of *chitraputhis* or illustrated manuscripts with beautiful miniatures on *sancipat*, *tulapat* folios. But these manuscripts mention only a few *khanikars* or artists, all men. In fact a recently published catalogue names only thirteen (13) artists (Kalita, 2009)

But what about the female artists who have lived and practiced closer to our times in the 20th and 21st centuries so far? They have been mentioned by art critics and art historians who have not cared to devote whole essays, chapters, monographs to them individually. This has not been the case with male artists who have received elaborate individual attention. Sometimes well-meaning essays/chapters by even feminist art critics and art historians have failed the test of balanced, unbiased documentation, by putting all the female artists en masse in the same work with passing references. (Kandali, 2011)

References:

Corsmeyer, Carolyn and Peg Brand Weiser. Feminist Arsthetics. *The Stanford Encyclopaedia ofPhilosophy* (Winter 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta(ed.), URL=https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win 2021/entries/feminism-aesthetics/>.

Gombrich, E.H. (2017). *The Story of Art.* New York: Phaidon Press

Hessel, Katy. (2022). *The Story of Art Without Men*. Portsmouth, NH: Hutchinson Heinemann

Kalita, Naren. *(2009).An Alphabetical Index of Illustrated Manuscripts of Assam.* New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts

Kandali, M. (2011). Asmor Silpakalar Adhunik Parbat Narisilpi. *Asomor Adhunik Sipakala* (pp53-73). Vadodara: Black & White

Mindfield. (2023). 13th May. The Times of India.

Vasari, Georgio. (2006). *The Lives of The Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, And Architects.* New York: Modern Library

THE DISABLED FEMALE BODY ON STAGE: A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO SELECT 'BEAUTY PAGEANTS' AND INTERVIEWS IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

Ms. Chandana Das
Assistant Professor
Department of English, Dakshin Kamrup College, Mirza
Ph. D Research Scholar, Department of English, Gauhati University

Abstract

The aim of this work is to examine some key notions attached to the able body like beauty and subjecthood and how the disabled body on stage can challenge such notions. The paper takes into account representation of the disabled female body on a theatrical stage, particularly in the form of the beauty pageants in contemporary India. The paper also underscores how the disabled relegated to the private sphere or made an object to be stared at while in public can in the theatrical mode (in this case, the beauty pageants), enter into direct engagement with the spectators and also contradict the perceived notions surrounding disability. For that matter, it takes into account select clips from beauty pageants and interviews available on the public audio-visual platform YouTube. For the theoretical grounding of the argument, the paper rests on some primary concerns chiefly from the field of feminist disability theories, while also deploying a few concepts from performance/theatre studies like the 'gaze' and the reciprocity of gazes in a performing act.

Introduction

Disability has emerged as a fertile ground for exploration from many levels. Primarily starting with the medical model, it has moved to the social model and to its more complex interactions with gender, race or class. A person with disability can be physically impaired and may doubly face disabling barriers in society that render them disabled. Many cultural attitudes towards the body also render it disabled. Once stigmatized as disabled, there opens up a gap between the public and the private domain and it is to the private domain of 'home' that a person with

disability is generally relegated to. In this connection, Susan Wendell in her essay, "Toward a Feminist Theory of Disability" (Wendell, 2006) says:

> In the split between the public and the private worlds, women (and children) have been relegated to the private, and so have the disabled, the sick and the old (and mostly women take care of them). The public world is the world of strength, the positive (valued) body, performance and production, the able-bodied and youth. Weakness, illness, rest and recovery, pain, death and the negative (de-valued) body are private, generally hidden, and often neglected. (p. 247)

For individuals with disabilities, they are never offstage in terms of the feeling of unsettlement they cause in public view. They are always under a scrutinizing gaze, rendering them more vulnerable to prejudices. Since people with disabilities have limited space for opening up and while traditionally the social gaze on the disabled body tends to stigmatize or alienate them, the theatre or a performance stage allows the disabled body to come to the forefront and engage with the world creatively. Staging, theatre or any kind of performance has been an integral part of the cultural life of people. The visual or the theatrical provide modes to represent, interrogate and critique various aspects of the society. An interesting thing that happens in the arena of theatre or any stage performance is that there is a play of gazes in the sense that both the characters on stage and the spectators are locked in reciprocal gazes and thus, they influence each other. Thus, when a person with disability enters the stage, it provides him/her to showcase their lived experience in a disabled body, which is somewhat marginalized, and to reverse their position as an object to a speaking subject.

> …whereas in life, as suggested, the watcher usually has power over the watched, in the theatre the actor, who performs a fictional identity, may play with, undermine, even contradict the identity the watcher wishes to construct for the 'character', and thus the watched may be able to impose on the watcher. (Leach, 2008, pp. 94, 95)

Now speaking of a female disabled subject, the disability experience is even more layered. Feminist disability scholars like Rosemary Garland-Thomson have demonstrated that disability in the experiential form is even faced by the able-bodied females. She looks at the stereotypes that surround the dependent, inadequate, weak, and vulnerable bodies of women and people with disabilities. As a result, she discovers a correlation between the representation of women and individuals with disabilities, who are both portrayed as weak, fragile, dependent, and helpless bodies. Then, speaking of the disabled female subject who does not conform to particular "normate" physical criteria, she emphasises how "the twin ideologies of normalcy and beauty" both deprive her of "normative femininity" and turn her into objects of spectacle. She writes:

Disabled women are, of course, a marked and excluded—albeit quite varied—group within the larger social class of women. The relative privileges of normative femininity are often denied to disabled women (Fine and Asch 1988). Cultural stereotypes imagine disabled women as asexual, unfit to reproduce, overly dependent, unattractive—as generally removed from the sphere of true womanhood and feminine beauty. (Garland-Thomson, 2006, p. 266)

She emphasises how society creates stereotypes about women with disabilities. Therefore, an interesting situation is created when, with a deviant body, the female disabled subject enters the stage, which is a theatrical space of being seen and to see. It not only brings her from the domain of the private to the public, helping her to be an active creator of her own identity but also makes her engage in a reverse gaze with the spectators. In the arena of beauty pageants, which challenge the disability stigma in the world of fashion, the female disabled subject who gets to enter the stage has to interact with the audience, and is celebrated for her confidence and individuality. Thus, the pageant or the ramp show becomes a space that confers subjecthood and agency to the female disabled subject.

Disability, Nonconformity and The Return of 'Gaze' in Beauty Pageants of Contemporary India:

Beauty, since times immemorial, has functioned as a discourse which sets out to "dictate corporeal standards" (Garland-Thomson, 2006, p. 263) that find acceptability with some mainstream concept attached to it. There has been standardisation, or rather, a reduction of the concept of beauty to certain formulaic representations, particularly with regard to the female body. Like till recently, the Barbie figure perpetuated by Disney was thought to be the ideal feminine figure, chiefly in the West. In a way, the idea of beauty establishes an inclusive/exclusive framework in which some bodies are deemed normal and while some are deemed hideous, grotesque, or nonconforming. For a long time, the pageants or the visual theatrical modes of representation have excluded certain kinds of bodies and marketed some. These contests and pageants certainly have served as a matter of national pride but they have a role in setting certain standards of beauty. It is on such standards that the beauty and cosmetic industries thrive and try to make non-conforming bodies conform to a so-called norm.

Seen in this perspective, the beauty pageants while showcasing desirable bodies also create norms of desirability. The body is thus treated as an object of exhibition, with voyeuristic spectators serving as consumers. But nowadays, there are beauty pageants which tend to shift from the norm. These pageants shift away from reinforcing and propagating discourses surrounding conventional perceptions of beauty and strive to promote greater inclusivity with regard to bodies of all sizes and kinds. These pageants seek to revolutionize the traditional concept

of beauty as associated with able-bodiedness. Some such pageants and fashion shows outside India that work for people with disabilities are Miss Wheelchair America, Miss You Can Do It, Miss Wheelchair World, to name a few. In India too, pageants or shows now incorporate people with disabilities, an example of which is Walk with A Difference (WWAD), a social initiative of AIMS Media that is committed to bringing out the talents of people with disabilities in various categories like clothing, fashion, music and so on.

With respect to women with disabilities, India has seen Miss Wheelchair Contests being conducted since 2013. This contest is the brainchild of Mr. Sounak Banerjee, a tax consultant by profession, who was confined to a wheelchair in 2006 when he was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy. He found that people with disabilities were inadequately represented in the entertainment industry. So he came up with the idea of Miss Wheelchair India to provide women with disabilities to represent themselves on stage.

Winners and participants in such contests are active in promoting a non-conforming notion of beauty. For instance, Priya Bhargava, Winner of Miss Wheelchair India Pageant 2015 says that she wants to start a pageant for disabled people as people in our country cannot correlate beauty contests and disability (The Quint, 2017). At the age of 19, she was diagnosed with autoimmune disease called 'Systemic Lupus Erythematosus'. In her interviews with *The Quint* and *Speaking Tree,* (both of which are Indian news and opinion websites and have their own YouTube channels) she also mentioned how the pageant helped her embrace her body once more and how the contest was necessary to boost her morale (The Quint, 2017). She also discusses how she wants to serve people as a therapist. Similarly, the winner of Miss Wheelchair 2013 pageant named Nirmala Kewlani said during the Grand Finale event, "Beauty has never been personified with disability and so I think this is the great platform a great opportunity for me today to represent all my friends' contestants and every woman with disability in this country" (Rolling Emotions, 2014). Thus, these contestants with disabilities decked in beautiful costumes, smiling and interacting with audiences enlarge the notion of beauty.

By participating in these beauty pageants or any such stage acts that require engagement with the judges and audience, and giving interviews, these individuals are also demonstrating how they resist rather than internalise the stigma associated with disability in the public eye. The necessity of seeing oneself differently is the first step to challenge the narratives surrounding disability. This has also been emphasised in many works concerning the politics of beauty and appearance. For instance, Naomi Wolf in her book *How Images of*

Beauty are Used Against Women says,

> The contemporary ravages of the beauty backlash are destroying women physically and depleting us psychologically. If we are to free

ourselves from the dead weight that has once again been made out of femaleness, it is not ballots or lobbyists or placards that women will need first; it is a new way to see. (Wolf, 2002, p. 25)

Moreover, the very presence of the disabled body on stage dispels other fictitious depictions of it. It is the embodied subject that speaks, rather than being used as a character in someone's narrative. The possibility of counter gaze is also possible in the theatrical mode, like in the pageants in this case.

The performer/character's gaze, like the body's living presence that it asserts, exceeds the containing parameters of representational space and confronts the audience's gaze with an intersubjectivity that represents a potential/actual catastrophe in terms of spectatorial detachment. (Stanton B. Garner, 1994, p. 49)

To take for instance, in the Miss Wheelchair India Contest 2013, a brief clip of which is available on YouTube, the disabled wheelchair-ridden female participants who rolled onto the stage on their wheelchairs, were given a 'a representational space' where with their embodied presence they could make a mark. They did not adhere to conventional ideas of beauty as regular models would. Instead of simply projecting their bodies onto the stage, they displayed, or to say, performed their lived experiences as people with disabilities, all while being dressed in exquisite costumes.

"Which is the one quality that every contestant should have if the wheelchair is removed from their lives?" is a question a judge asks Sunita Sancheti, a participant, during the judge's question round of the same competition. In response, she says, "Wheelchairs actually don't matter as much in a contestant's life as their confidence and the things they accomplish in life which are more important." (Rolling Emotions, 2014)

It is thus significant that such a beauty pageant provided them the opportunity of representing themselves as subjects, answering questions of the judges, showing a direct engagement with the onlookers and thereby subverting the hierarchy of showing and seeing.

Also this act of looking back becomes more prominent when the pageant winners and contestants are given space to represent themselves in social media interviews and documentaries, wherein they challenge the perspective of how society looks at them. In this connection, the words of Virali Modi can be recalled. In an interview with BBC News Hindi, she spoke of how she was once molested by a porter in a railway station and how she started her activism for railways to be more inclusive, "This is my throne, I am the queen and I am considered Hot Wheels. So you don't mess with me." (BBC News Hindi, 2017) This is how she exhibits the self-consciousness that she is seen, demands the right kind of gaze and wishes to write her own narrative. She now works as an activist and wishes

to make railway stations disabled-friendly. Due to her petitions, some railway stations like Chennai Central and some stations in Thiruvananthapuram and Kochi have introduced disabled-friendly infrastructure like foldable wheelchairs and portable ramps. Thus, what the theatrical spaces of the pageants and videos offer is a transformation from being viewed as an object to be abused to being an active voice that returns the gaze and affirms how she wishes to be seen.

Conclusion

To sum up, it can be said that the theatrical mode of representation can be a very efficient medium of representing disability. It can make people with disabilities challenge the stigma and stereotypes that they face head-on. Although the modern beauty pageants offer them a platform, there is still need for more opportunities for them to participate in other forms of representation.

References

BBC News Hindi (2017, December 5). *Miss Wheelchair **is** Making Train Travel Safer in India (BBC Hindi)* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved November 10, 2023 from https://youtu.be/oeinVd7bC1E?si=20pWq0qvQnp7jVDh

Garland-Thomson, R. (2006). Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory. In L. J.

Davis (Ed.), *The Disability Studies Reader.* New York: Routledge.

Leach, R. (2008). *Theatre Studies The basics.* Routledge.

Rolling Emotions (2014, May 7). *Highlights from Grand Finale held on 24th Nov 2013 in*

Mumbai [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved November 10, 2023 from https://youtu.be/MG7yQFSqqd8?si=AH1a1_6WqPamp0bx

Stanton B. Garner, Jr. (1994). *Bodied Spaces Phenomenology and Performance in*

Contemporary Drama. New York: Cornell University Press.

The Quint (2017, September 22). *The Disabled Too Have A Right to Beauty, Says Miss Wheelchair India Priya Bhargava - The Quint* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved November 9, 2023 from https://youtu.be/Vpp9pZm1Dpg?si=p2g5Pye2eH-28MJc

Wendell, S. (2006). Toward a Feminist Theory of Disability. In L. J. Davis (Ed.), *The Disability Studies Reader* (p. 247). New York: Routledge.

Wolf, N. (2002). *How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women.* Harper Collins e-books. Available from https://singlelogin.re/

EMPOWER HERMENT: FLIPPING THE SCRIPT, WOMEN DEFYING EXPECTATIONS

Arunava Borah

M.A. 3rd semester

Department of English, Cotton University

Panbazar, Guwahati

Abstract

This paper aims to analyse the various nuances that push the narratives focusing on women in a derogatory fashion in terms of mass media, whether it be in films, art, advertisements, or otherwise. Women's characters are often compartmentalised as secondary roles, deemed unfit for leadership positions, and often relegated to behind-the-scenes roles, such as housewives or assistants. Despite women's significant accomplishments, they are not always validated or respected by predominantly male audiences due to the prevalent patriarchal attitudes that persist in society. This paper aims to openly scrutinise the portrayal of women as "damsels in distress," the prevalent hyper sexualization, objectification, unrealistic expectations, and beauty standards that are set only in regards to women, simultaneously forever pushing women into the strict pressure that if they only adhere to the standards, only then will they be recognised or validated, along with numerous other nuances of female representation in popular slang and the overall gender bias that accompanies representation in mass media, that always pushes women as an inferior gender only to further accentuate the narrative that they aren't the superior gender in the spectrum of hierarchy and to elucidate everything that is wrong with this practice and the rectification that's required with specific examples of certain characters that have vehemently defied all the said stereotypes.

Keywords: Damsel, Hyper-sexualisation , Objectification, Patriarchy, Gender bias

Introduction

Mass media wields significant influence as it is extensively consumed through a variety of mediums, including television, movies, and advertisements, among others. Our daily consumption of media exerts a profound impact on our

perspectives, shaping our behaviours and attitudes towards our surroundings. To illustrate, during the era when the brand Fair and Lovely was prominently featured in advertisements, our society placed a higher emphasis on individuals with fairer complexions when choosing life partners, often discriminating against those with darker skin. Over time, we have gradually shed these prejudiced notions, moving toward a more inclusive stance. This exemplifies the immense power that mass media holds. In essence, media represents a potent force that can shape societal beliefs and values.

Thus, the fact that we are constantly surrounded with such influences that cater the public into perpetuating a narrative that has the ability to manipulate our consciousness is not something to be considered with a pinch of salt. If we were to analyse more on how advertisements work as a manipulative agent there's pure scope to extend this discussion entirely as an individual branch of research. The level at which the public consume certain intended narrative formulations is substantial to their own perception of reality which is dangerous to a large extent as it catalyses to formulate a coherent public narrative. As Advertisements, specifically in a country like India, form a big part of our shared culture. This is again, because of the very fact that advertisements don't just showcase the products, they also reinforce subtle messages that influence how we think. This also works largely in enforcing and strengthening stereotypes or can also help in positively as well by encouraging more affirmative practices like taking up vaccines, etc.

Nonetheless, regrettably, there is compelling evidence to support the notion that a significant number of misogynistic advertisements contribute significantly to the prevalence of violence against women. Extensive research has illustrated that the troubling objectification of women, often employed to enhance commercial gains and boost advertising revenue, significantly augments the perception of women and the broader female populace as less capable and intelligent when it comes to assuming leadership roles. This, in turn, diminishes their standing, relegating them to the status of individuals solely designed to cater to the desires and preferences of the male population.

Types of women in Ads

For instance, women in numerous advertisements in India are constantly portrayed as cooking, washing, cleaning. Certain advertisements emphasise a specific narrative that all households chores that women perform, is noble, selfless, and is an reflection of the essence of womanhood itself. We can almost establish a characterisation of how women are portrayed across the entire medium of advertisements:

- First and foremost, let's delve into the depiction of women as "superheroes or sheroes." This particular archetype represents a captivating character

who captivates the audience with her sharp intellect and almost enchanting ability to accomplish hours of monotonous tasks within mere minutes, ultimately coming to the rescue. This superwoman is dedicated to fulfilling her husband's needs, excels as a highly involved mother to her children, and dutifully plays the role of a daughter-in-law to her husband's family members. Yet, this portrayal of a "Superwoman" becomes farcical on multiple fronts, as it frequently characterizes this supposed "savior" as nothing more than a servant to all. She is anticipated to prioritize everyone else's needs and desires above her own, perpetually moulding herself into a passive entity crafted solely for the service of others, often forsaking her own interests and aspirations in the pursuit of making other people happy. This portrayal raises significant concerns, as it perpetuates the notion that women should not live for themselves but instead be dedicated solely to serving others, reinforcing a problematic narrative.

- Yet another extremely problematic portrayal of woman is the typical "*Silent Offstage*" woman. This kind of woman are always presented behind the scenes, emphasising their existence only to assist the main characters in the frontline. They are forcefully relegated to the periphery and are also validated for the minor chores such as the husbands shining white washed and neatly pressed clothes or the fact that the wife keeps the husband's belongings in a prim and proper way as per her husband's liking.

- The next type of advertisements however is vehemently patriarchal on so many nuances that it becomes misogynistic in an increasingly intense sense. Netizens term this form of advertisements as "*Femvertising*". This type of advertisement portrayal caters to emphasis on males rather than on females wherein Males earn brownie points for 'allegedly' helping out their co-partners, such as washing dishes and cleaning the house. These form of problematic advertisements glorifies the bare minimum jobs that women have been perennially doing yet are almost forcefully cursed into the lifestyle wherein men are celebrated for the same which paradoxically, are still being upheld as "womanly" jobs. This narrativisation emphasises women's positions towards the background simultaneously justifying it in order to not let them transgress these positions further limiting their positionality in the larger spectrum of gender hierarchy and their subsequent validation, simultaneously negating and nullifying any further scope of them overcoming this particular obstacle.

- Yet another debilitating issue pertaining to the entire discussion of women's representation is always centred on the inaccurate representation of females in order to churn out more viewership out of their creative utilizations, wherein producers and directors present a vehemently patriarchal position of putting forth the onus of successfully functioning a household in an

extremely flawless manner alongside keeping up with all social pressures on the laps of the female. One mainstream superficial notion of a perfect mother or a perfect daughter is one who exudes a piousness towards being completely obedient to run a household without making anyone feel like she's been burdened by the responsibilities.

Problematic narrativisation of Indian advertisements and other serials

One thing that remains certain with absolute certainty is the fact that Indian advertisements try to reinforce the ideology that household or domestic work performed by women is not rendered or validated as hard work. It's unpaid labour that a female has signed up for ever since their birth, of which they are absolutely in no position to complain. Indian advertisements and the producers who curate these advertisements merely work as agents that cumulatively work to emphasize the intrinsic patriarchal tendencies to perepherialize a woman's sanctity in such a way that this entire exercise of curating and broadcasting an advertisement acts as a means of negating and nullifying a female's existence to be on par with their male counterparts.

Regrettably, the reality is rather disheartening. On an average day, an Indian woman finds herself dedicating a staggering 90 percent of her day to household chores. When we delve into the statistics, we discover that an average Indian woman allocates approximately 352 minutes daily to these demanding and unpaid domestic responsibilities. In simpler terms, this translates to roughly 6 hours of her daily life being consumed by these labour-intensive tasks.

Sadly enough, Indians have a very rigid sense of generalizing a woman's participation in household activities as mandatory work, for which they are almost encouraged to remain confined within the four walls of a house. This problematic narrativisation is also propagated in numerous Indian cinemas and daily soap shows and serials broadcasted by various television entertainment networks, which accentuates a sense of glorification of the idea of women being confined to their domestic barriers.

One famous example could be the famous daily soap show "Saath Nibhana Saathiya," wherein the female characters that garner the main central focus are always seen to be engaged in domestic chores. The popular character of'GopiBahu' is presented as a naïve, submissive, and obedient wife and daughter-in-law who has to undergo tumultuous mental and emotional torture from her in-laws with inferior treatments to persevere and overcome as an obedient and pious daughter-in-law who puts everyone's needs before her own.

This narrativization, in a way, insinuates and makes room for intrinsically violent and immoral behaviour towards women through their in-laws. Because such cruel forms of behaviour are consumed to such a large extent, numerous

people have absorbed and ingrained this gruesome mentality that they must assert their dominance over the bride and have been reported to showcase inferior treatment towards their daughters-in-law. This paves the way for several heinous crimes against women, in several cases even taking the lives of the daughter-in-laws that make the headlines of several news that hinges on the perpetrators and criminal's obsession of being inspired by such and such serials.

Is Bollywood a catalyst of perpetuating misogyny?

Within the realm of Indian cinema, particularly Bollywood, there exists a significant concern regarding its potential role as the foremost contributor to the perpetuation of misogynistic tendencies within society. This problematic narrative is upheld through various means, such as the inclusion of item songs and storylines in Bollywood films. These elements, rather alarmingly, bear the responsibility of instilling misogynistic attitudes and reinforcing stereotypes that, in turn, foster an environment of violence and intolerance. The regressive nature of these narrative choices, which seem to promote and glamorize increasingly hostile attitudes towards women, is particularly troubling serials.

One glaring example of this issue is the prevalence of item songs in Bollywood films. These songs, far from celebrating the empowerment of women, often serve as a platform for the aggressive objectification of women, reducing them to mere instruments of pleasure for the male audience. What is most surprising is that when these popular songs are collectively consumed by a mass audience, they contribute to shaping a collective consciousness that aligns with the ideas initially propagated within the songs themselves.In essence, Bollywood, with its vast reach and influence, must reflect on its role in shaping societal norms and attitudes. It should aspire to be a positive force for change, fostering equality and respect rather than perpetuating harmful stereotypes and misogynistic behaviour.

We can extend this argument with the example of the movie "Kabir Singh", a movie personalizing toxic masculinity. The popular movie is a blatant example of overtly glorifying domestic violence, physical abuse, violence, and misogynistic behaviour towards women. When examined thoroughly, this archetype of movies is the sole source of perpetuating violence against women, and yet, this movie became popular, much because of the unfortunate fact that *violence sells.* Along with numerous other Bollywood movies that pave the way towards normalizing Eve, teasing and nullifying the concept of 'consent', which is purely extended by this popular song, "tuHaankaryanaakar, tuhaimeri Kiran," This song, however popular it might be, is completely problematic as it insists on the fact that the character is adamant on making Kiran his own or wife, even when she rejects him and says no.

Defiance and it's significance

Amid the pervasive existence of these problematic narratives, the concept of defiance emerges as a vital force, serving as a potent catalyst in challenging the archaic and restrictive framework that deprives women of the opportunity to fully realize their individual selves. Instead of allowing women the freedom to express their individuality, these narratives impose severe limitations on them, often subjecting them to denigrating and harmful practices that perpetuate a culture marked by regression.

In the light of these circumstances, it becomes an imperative responsibility for conscientious and concerned citizens to remain vigilant in their choices of content consumption and promotion. It is crucial to actively support and endorse narratives and representations that contribute to the evolution of a progressive society, one that fosters empowerment and equality, rather than perpetuating regressive norms and practices. By actively engaging with content that aligns with these values, we can collectively shape a society that empowers individuals and dismantles the barriers that hinder the realization of one's full potential.

Movies such as "Thappad" serve as poignant illustrations of the paramount significance of self-assertion and the courage to stand up against violence. In a similar vein, works like "Neel BatteySannate" underscore the pivotal role that female education plays in the empowerment of women, shedding light on the transformative power of knowledge. And then there are films like "Pink," which cast a stark spotlight on the dualities and harshness inherent in our society. They emphasize the unsettling reality where females are consistently subjected to scrutiny and blame in the aftermath of heinous crimes committed against them, while the male perpetrators often escape swift retribution.

These films are not merely pieces of entertainment but serve as crucial instruments of enlightenment. They play the role of eye-openers, unveiling the deep-seated flaws in our societal fabric. By doing so, they compel us to confront the uncomfortable truths that we, as a society, have, regrettably, grown accustomed to. They encourage us to question why crime rates are on the rise and why we have seemingly become desensitized to them, when, in reality, they should deeply trouble us. These movies serve as catalysts for introspection, urging us to challenge our collective complacency and work towards a safer, more just society for all. Women's representation in media also insinuates the male gaze that is always looked with a derogatory tone, again accentuating Eve teasing and nullifying consent further escalating violence against women.

Conclusion

The realm of mass media wields immense influence, serving as a potent catalyst responsible for the dissemination of both progressive and regressive patterns of human behaviour. In essence, it plays a pivotal role in shaping the

societal landscape, ultimately determining whether it becomes a nurturing and inclusive space for individuals of all genders to flourish. It is, therefore, of paramount importance that the media fulfils its role responsibly and conscientiously. To this end, the media's representation of critical and authentic issues is vital. When media platforms avoid promoting misogynistic or violent insinuations, they actively contribute to curbing the propagation of harmful behaviours and attitudes that lead to a surge in crimes against women. The significance of this responsibility is particularly heightened in the 21st century, where audiences are more diverse, informed, and demanding than ever before.

As discerning and responsible 21st-century audiences, it is incumbent upon us to exercise vigilance in our media consumption. The content we engage with can significantly shape the collective perceptions and attitudes of society. By making informed choices that reject content promoting harm and violence while actively supporting narratives that advocate for equity and safety for all genders, we contribute to a more compassionate and inclusive world. Our actions as consumers have the power to nudge the media industry in the direction of a safer and more nurturing environment, ultimately ensuring that all individuals can thrive securely and without fear.

References

ume:03/Issue:04/April-2021 Impact Factor- 5.354 www.irjmets.com

A Critical Review: Portrayal Of Women In Mass Media-NaazBano*1, Rajesh Dahiya*2, EktaMelkani*3

Media and the image of women-Report of the 1st Conference of the Council of Europe Network of National Focal Points on Gender Equality.

WOMEN AND ENVIRONMENT: ISSUES OF INTEGRATION AND CONFRONTATIONS

Mehjubin Sultana[1]
Assistant Professor
Department of Political Science, Tezpur College
Rahul Bania[2]
Assistant Professor
Department of Political Science, Tezpur College

Abstract

In the 1960s scholarly articles and researches have started sparkling an issue that Women and Environment are closely connected. They have similarities, integration and inter dependence. After the revelation of this fact policy makers and government became more sensitive while implementing any legislation targeting environment and women. The increasing gap between male and female has placed women in the periphery where they can realize the need of environment in their life. More significantly this need of environment has also emerged in the consciousness among the women folk regarding preservation and protection of environment. This paper aims to reflect on the relationships between women and environment. It will provide multiple opportunities to understand and discover integration and confrontations between women and environment. While writing this article we have collected data from secondary sources. This article will surely visualize the issues faced by both women and environment and the probable measures that can be taken to eradicate.

Keywords: *Women, Environment, Health, Interconnected*

Introduction

From the time immemorial it has been observed that humankind has their root in environment. Once human learnt to survive only within environment. Environment has shaped human needs, consciousness, social and cultural life. At the same time human also has greater influence on environment. Human influence over environment is though not positive in the end but both are interconnected. Most significantly in the 1960s researchers revealed a very surprising discovery

that women and men interact with environment differently. Environmental changes have greater influences on women than men. For example, climate change, drought, scarcity in natural resources has influenced women more adversely than men. But they are less represented in ecological decision making.

Objective of the study: Our article aims to focus on the following issues:

i) To reveal the inter connectedness between women and environment.

ii) To discuss the confrontations faced by women from ecological issues

Methodology:

We have used secondary data in our paper. Data have been gathered from magazine, books, scholarly resources and online platforms. We have used descriptive and analytical method in our paper.

Women and environment:

Women are situated in the most marginalized position of society. They always face multifaceted discrimination both from society and family as a result of patriarchal social structure. Women in order to make a living, to be specific for surviving mostly depend on environment. Environmental changes have great influence on the existence and living of women. Vice versa environment is also protected and preserved mostly by women. Women have a crucial role in shaping and protecting environmental progress. From 1980s it has been gaining attention from the whole international and domestic research community. Women have to stay limited within the household work and they are the one who have to face every kind of ecological degradation. They can also ensure that the fragile ecosystem has been managed, protected in an efficient and sustainable way.

Women and environment is one of the 12 critical areas of concerns identified in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the fourth world conference on women in 1995 by world leaders. This platform pinpointed three focal points that should be focused by the government. It included:

i) Active engagement of women in ecological decision making

ii) Integrating the needs and preferences of women in policy and programs making

iii) Determination of specific ways to access the impact of development and environment policies on women.

Environment and ecological concerns have entered into the realm of feminist movement. To acknowledge the relationship between ecology and women a new branch of feminism came into focus by the name "Ecofeminism". The supporters of ecofeminism believe that women and nature have close connections as reflected in all fields– society, economy, religion, politics, and literature. There is also

oppression of both environment and women. One on the name of development and another on the name of patriarchy.

The viewpoint of ecofeminism on the issue of interconnectedness between women and environment are as follows:

i) One of the branches of eco feminism is Radical Feminism. It contends that the society which is based on patriarchy has degraded both women and environment to fulfill their needs. To eradicate or end these degradation one has to find out the root at first, which is laying behind the structure of the society.

ii) The other branch of eco feminism i.e. Cultural Feminism asserts that women have a more intimate relationship with nature because of their gender roles. Because of their separate gender roles like - family nurturer and provider of food they have to come in close contact with environment. Moreover, the biological uniqueness of women also allows them to be more sensitive and concerned towards degradation of women.

Eco feminism has considered this interconnectedness between women and environment as a form of blessing. These connections should be prioritized more where women can lead environmental progress. Women are the prime victim of environmental harms and degradation. It has affected not only health of women but has social, cultural and ecological connotations.

The relationship between women and environment is manifold. Women have to depend on nature for various kinds of needs of their social and personal life. The following diagram will help us to understand the picture clearly:
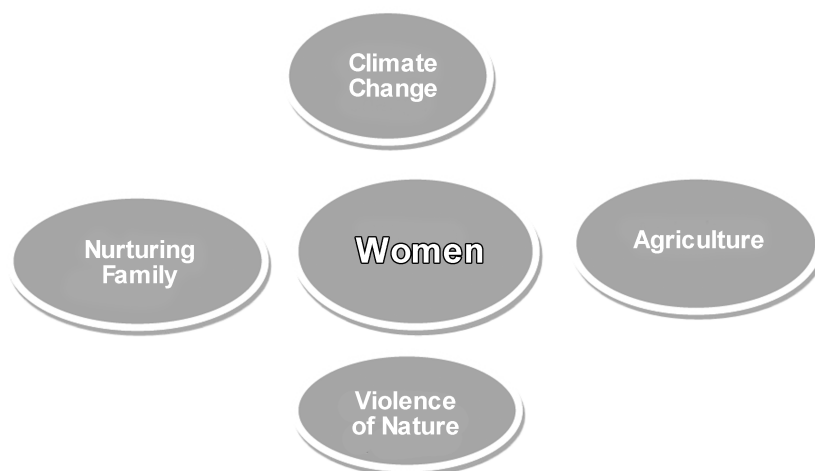
Figure 1: Dependence of women on environmental elements

Climate change has adverse effects on all over the society. But it has more specific harms on the women. Every major and minor form of climate change transforms the lifestyle of women. Drought, flood, scarcity of food etc. have more negative effects on women. As women live in the very basic phase of society devoid of developmental opportunities they have to deal with the environmental changes more acutely than men. They have to shoulder the responsibility of gathering foods for family members, nurturing of the children etc.

In the majority areas of the world women are engaged in farming and gatherings of domestic foods. An increasing number of women are expanding their involvement in agricultural tasks. A study conducted in women of Africa showed that in many African tribes the task of food production is given on the hand of women. In developing nations women are the prime actors who are engaged in farming and agricultural works. So, any kind of environmental change has greater impact on women and their lives.

Women are the main victim of environmental degradation. There is a correlation between degradation of environment and sub ordination of women. Carolyn Merchant and Vandana Shiva have observed that exploitation of women labour as well as the abuse of environment is connected as they are both marginalized within the economy. Environmental degradation has widened the gap between gender roles of men and women. Further the advancement of technology has also eliminated women access from agriculture and environment. It has again started subordination of both women and environment. Violence on nature is directly or indirectly harmful for women.

Society has created double standard gender roles for men and women. While men are allowed for all tough works and external activities women are kept engaged within the four walls of family. They are regarded as naturally having loving and motherly nature and responsibility of Child bearing and nurturing of family is given on the shoulder of women only. This responsibility has greatly shaped and determined by environment. Lactating mother, pregnant women are dependent on environment.

Accordingly, environment too is dependent on women for its sustenance and growth. Women are basically situated on the closest location of environment where they can take lead role in initiate steps that can cure environmental diseases. From the environmental protection movements lead the women leaders from the late 20th century shed lights on the probable capacity of women to address environmental problems and ethics. The way environment is protected, shaped and influenced by women are as follows:
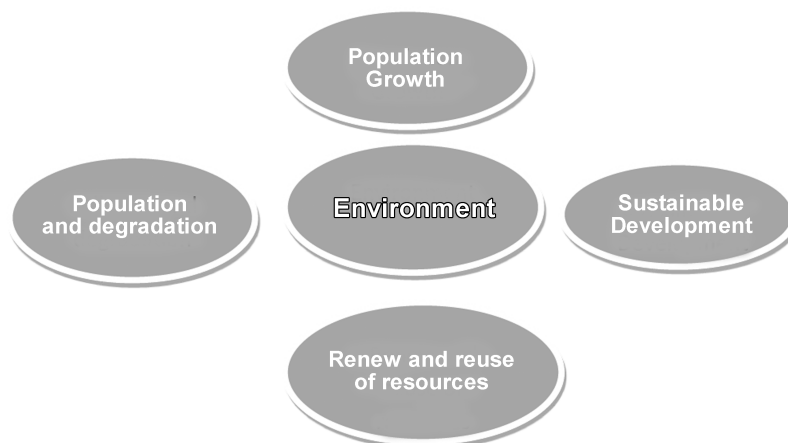
Figure 2: Dependence of environment on women

Population explosion and growth that has caused enormous use of limited resources of environment, water, soil, air pollution, imbalance of eco system is the consequence of low rate of women education. Population growth is directly connected to the lack of proper literacy rate among women. This problem has long term effect on the sustainability of environment. To beat this problem woman should be provided the lead role. Proper education and strong role in family planning can minimize this threat of environment.

Abolition of double standard gender roles and establishment of gender equality is probably the best way to make them capable of addressing the issue of sustainable environmental growth. Women are not only more affected by these problems but also possess ideas and leadership to solve them. The 2030 agenda for Sustainable development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by world leaders are totally comprehensive in nature and it left no one behind. Achieving gender equality and women empowerment is integral to each of the 17 goals.

Human survival is all dependent on sufficient existence of natural resources and healthy eco system. Now a day's women are working in all fields of the society. They have that capability to treat environment in a friendly way. The upcoming threat of lacking of resources could be solved by the women who are closely related with nature. If they are sufficiently trained and made aware about it then they will be able to reuse renewable natural resources. If women are placed at the centre they will make every possible effort to lessen the issues concerning environment.

Study shows that when environmental degradation occurs it is the women who suffer the most. They have to bear all the consequences of air pollution, water pollution, soil pollution on their health. To maintain healthy environment and to prevent all kind of environmental degradation it is the women who should come

to the forefront. They can take all the necessary initiative. As women are the closest one to the nature they can create an environment both in society and family regarding prevention of environment.

Conclusion:

Women and men with all their diversity interact with environment differently. Women have more concerns towards environment than that of men. The interconnectedness and interdependence between women and environment has made the two complimentary. Environmental changes and degradation has highest visible impacts on women. From ages they have been suffering from conservative traditional practices of our society. Accordingly, environment also facing difficulties due to growing desire of human being. Both women and environment are placed in the second position, so the closeness and inter connectivity that they have is natural. According to the scholars this connectedness should be honoured by society. Women should be prioritized in all environmental issues and concerns. Environmental movements occurred in the last decades of 20th century were mostly lead by women environmentalist. So, to ensure sustainable growth of both women and environment we should try to celebrate the integration and interconnectedness between women and environment.

References:

"Women and the Environment"; UN Women Data Hub

Women; United Nations Environment Programme

A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY ON ROLE OF WOMEN IN ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION

Binashree Gogoi[1]
Research Scholar
North Lakhimpur College (Autonomous)
Dr. Chitta Ranjan Bora[2]
Assistant Professor
North Lakhimpur College (Autonomous)

Abstract

Conservation of environment is utmost priority for mankind to ensure the sustenance of the human being on Earth. Hence, both male and female have been engaging in environment conservation. But there was a prevalent belief that women had no role in environmental protection & conservation. Against this assumption, it has been observed that over the years' women have been engaged in protection of environment.The connection between women and the environment is very strong. In order to protect the environment, various movements such as Chipko Movement in India, Bachao Andolon Movement in Nepal, Kenya's Green Belt Movement, and other women's environment movements were worth mentioning. These movements have achieved lot of success and created the much needed awareness.

Keywords: *Environment, Economic, Development, Movement, Nature, Women*

Introduction

In nature all plants, animals, people, and other living things exist and function together is known as environment. It is the relationship and interaction between all the biotic and abiotic factors with each other. The word "environment" comes from the French word "environer" which means "to encircle or surround". The study of the environment is referred to as ecology, environmental science and environmental education. There is an inseparable link between human society and the environment or nature. The current environment is in changing state due to individuals' lifestyles, style of wearing clothes, food traditions, languages, celebrations of various festivals etc. The environment can be divided into two categories i.e., the natural environment and man-made environment. With the

explosion of the human population environment has begun to deteriorate very quickly as a result of which present environment is almost completely destroyed, now the world is in a state of global warming, frequent quakes and volcanic explosions, tsunamis, floods, acid rain and droughts of any kind. Women, through their roles as farmers and water and firewood collectors, are closely linked to the local environment and women**,** children and other marginalized groups are the main victims of environmental degradation, especially during natural disasters (Akwa L.et al (2008) and (Raymond et al 1994). Now, people are waking up and realizing the importance of their environment for the survival of human life, as a result they are starting to work on protection of deteriorating of environment. In the field of environmental protection work, societies have been involved. The role of women in the protection of the environment became deeply rooted within society. At present women have equal rights in education. Women got liberation from slavery through a series of movements, awareness programs and laws (Mahour 2006). Now women are given 33% reservations. Women are more actively involved in protecting the environment than men because women are more directly affected and influenced by nature than men (Rao 2012). Women have a responsibility to protect the environment since they rely on it for everyday household necessities like water, fire wood, and fodder in addition to their livelihood. The majority of land and property in India is owned by men, which makes gender inequality there quite pronounced. In fact, a number of women's forest conservation movements, such as Appiko in the Western Ghats, Green Belt in Kenya, and Save the Rainforest in the Amazon, owe their origins to the Chipko movement (Mago and Gunwal 2019).

Both environmental sustainability and gender equality are part of the Millennium Development Goals. Women's participation in environmental protection would aid in the development of the sense of accountability that societies need, to maintain an honest balance between human population and the earth's resources.

Objectives

The paper has the following objectives
   i. To study about the environment movement.
   ii. To study the role of women in protection of environment.

Methodology

The research employed the analytical and descriptive methods to get insights into the topic. The secondary sources of data used in the study included newspapers, books, journals, reports, and other publications.

Role of Women in Protecting the Environment

Women made significant contributions in the fields of environmental preservation and protection as well. Women are deeply concerned about their

environment and have a direct relationship with it through their daily actions. Mostly in undeveloped nations, women work in agriculture fields and gather firewood and water straight from the environment. Women are more closely connected to nature, which creates a culture of conservation and preservation of the environment to ensure that future generations can meet their needs through the environment and also learn ways to preserve nature and the environment for their next generation, i.e., sustainable development. Without women's participation, protection of environment and its resources cannot be safeguard. Women are playing very important role in the management of the home, they taught their children the culture of sustainable development, like wastage of water, reduce electricity consumption, reduce the usage of spray and perfume, plastic and other disposables, correct use of detergents, reduce the use of personal vehicles for saving fuel etc. They also increase awareness on energy saving practices, waste management from factories, agriculture fields and households.

Women and the environment are closely delineated and the intimate relationship between woman and nature led to birth of the theory of ecofeminism, which is a field linking ecological ethics and feminism that tries explore the conceptual connections between environmental pollution and sexism oppression (Warren 1994).

The Rio declaration on universal rights and obligations affirms that women have an important role to play in environmental management and development. The declaration argues that the full participation of women is essential to achieve sustainable development (Rio, 1992).

The relationship between women and the environment have been present throughout human history from the time immemorial. Women have been personified into powerful symbols of nature e.g., Mother Earth, Earth Goddess etc. In Indian God and goddess' love for the environment can be seen in mythological stories. Such instances are Durga Devi rides on a lion, Lord Ganesha rides a mouse, Lord Shiva rides a Nandi (bull), Laxmi Devi rides on an owl, Saraswati Devi on a goose and Worship of the tree, etc. Women were protectors and lifeguards, the next first guide and instructors of communities of next generation.

Harsh Sethi (Senior Environmental Scientist) shares the environment fights in India in five categories:

(1) Forest-based - forest policy, use of forest resources, etc.

(2) Cultivation - industrialization and the demise and arbitrary popularization of agriculture degradation of land and water courses is caused by chemical discharges, use of minerals resources.

(3) Against large dams with involuntary displacement of tribals and non-tribals, environmental degradation of people living upstream, including deforestation.

(4) Against industrial pollution; and

5) Against over exploitation of marine natural resources.

Ancient Status of Women

A large body of literature attempts to highlight the importance of the interaction between women and the environment (Mahour 2016). Gender interactions and gender-sensitive solutions for boosting village ecosystem management are discussed by Chandra *et al.* (2009). It looks at how women may improve family food security through community livelihood initiatives and home gardens. Additionally, it documents women's perspectives and indigenous knowledge on food and medicinal plants that are in risk of extinction. Akter*et al.,* (2010) analysed different aspects of women's roles in allotment gardens such as women's participation in management activities, understanding the impact of allotment gardens on women's income and livelihood and enhance women's income awareness of them. Vegetable growing activities support environmental protection. Zahan (2008) argues that environmental degradation negatively affects third world countries due to the vicious cycle of poverty. Omobuwajo et al., (2008) investigate information and practices on Nigerian medicinal plants which are mostly women.

Women are involved in a variety of environmental initiatives throughout Asia. Women from rural peasant backgrounds, both in Thailand and other nations, have made significant contributions to campaigns protecting the environment and natural resources. In Thailand, the percentage of forests fell from 53% in 1961 to 29% in 1985. Rural Thai women made significant contributions to the reforestation effort that restored the woods. Under Thailand's DhammaRakhsa Reforestation Program, women restored forests and created new revenue streams based on sustainable agriculture and reforestation. Additionally, Thai women are banding together to oppose shrimp farming and Eucalyptus plantations (Sonkhaskar 2020). One of the biggest dam projects in the world, the Three Gorges Dam Project on the Yangtze River, has been the target of protests in China, led by writer Dai Qing. She was sent to jail because of the writings she did against the dam (Sonkhaskar 2020). In India, women came to know that deterioration of the arable land results in soil erosion and excessive water drainage leading to salting and loss of food crops. Together, they're renting the areas that have deteriorated and using conventional agriculture to restore them.

In three years, 700 acres of land have been returned to agricultural use (Ress 1992).

Women's Movement to Protect Environment

Over the years women have been engaging in various movements to protect & conserve the environment. Across the world various movements were leaded by women. Some of these movements are-

Bishnoi movement (1700), Chipko movement (1973), Silent valley movement (1978), Jungle Bachao movement (1982), Appiko movement (1983) Narmada bachao Andolon (1985) Green belt movement (1977) etc.

Bishnoi movement (1700)- The Bishnoi people of Rajasthan had first used the Chipko tactics against felling of the trees. The genesis of Bishnoi movement began due to the royal order of Maharaja Abhay Singh to cutting of Khejri trees, worshipped by Bishnois, for construction of fortress. Amrita Devi led the movement and protested against the order as she hugged the tree, as a new form of dissent. Amrita Devi and her three daughters were beheaded for disobeying royal order. Just before her martyrdom, Amrita Devi declared, "If a tree is saved even at the cost of one's head, it's worth". Maharaja finally stopped order as 363 Bishnois lost their lives in nonviolent method for protection of trees. Thus, Bishnois movement laid the foundation of environment protection movement in India.

Chipko Movement (1973)- The movement started in 1973 at Garhwal division of Uttar Pradesh specially Chamoli District." Chipko movement was led by Sunderlal Bahuguna, Bachi Devi, Gauri Devi and women of the Garhwal area who saved trees by embracing them. Again in 1977 a large number of rural women saved the Adwani Forest under the leadership of Bachchni Devi. The movement began with the government refusal to supply ash tree to the Dasholi Gram Swarajya Mandal (DGSM), (workers' cooperative) for processing plant of forest produces (especially for making plough) in Chamoli District. Instead, government gave green signal for Simon Company to cut ash trees for production of sporting goods. The DGSM organised protest against government decision to promote Simon Company instead of villagers. This boosted the Chipko protest. Women formed Mahila Mandal for the protection of forest as they understand the forest degradation has more direct impact on their lives. The method of tree hugging protest led by Gauri Devi and Bachi Devi found success against chopping down the trees. Simon Company stopped cutting of trees. The main slogan of women was, the forest is our mother's home, we will defend it with all our might which prove their eagerness to protect forest.

Appiko Movement (1983) This movement was started in Karnataka to protect Western Ghats Forest. This movement was initiated by PandurangaHegde. In September 1983, men, women and children of Salkani (a village in Western Ghats) "hugged the trees" in Kalase forest. This movement was against government policy to open forest for industrial development. The members of Mahila Mandal include Adivasi women joined for protection of rainforest by writing down to the government for halting of woodcutting. The village women conducted awareness programmes through foot marches, folk dance, street plays, and dramas. Due to the strong protest from people, Government stopped industrial policy on Western Ghats which resulted in destruction of forest.

Silent Valley Movement (1976) Silent Valley is one of the important biodiversity hotspots in Southern end of Western Ghats in Kerala. The Silent Valley Movement was against the decision of Kerala Government to construct a dam for hydroelectric power project in the Silent Valley Forest. The Malayalam poet and environmentalist,

SugathaKumari was the prominent leader in this movement. Despite the offer of employment and development in the area, people, especially women opposed the hydroelectricity project. As a result, the project was cancelled by personal interventions of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1980 and Silent Valley was declared as a National Park in 1984.

Narmada BachaoAndolan (1985) This movement was started against the building of a number of dams along the Narmada River funded by World Bank. The movement spread to three states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh as the construction of SardarSarovar Dam affect the environment and settlement of people of these areas. The movement which was led by MedhaPatkar, Baba Amte, and Arundhati Roy had turned into the international protest, gaining support from NGO'S all around the globe. Due to the protest World Bank withdrew project in 1993.

So, from the above discussion it has seen that women have a major role on protection of environment. In this way the role of women in conservation of environment can be discussed.

Conclusion

Women have a major role to play in the development and management of the environment. Therefore, it is imperative that they participate fully to achieve sustainable development. Historically, women have been the main guardians of biodiversity. They still carry out tasks including conservation, multiplication, and seed selection. Regarding agrobiodiversity, rural and tribal women are widely renowned for their on-farm conservation practices. The role of women's and men's relationship to the environment is a crucial factor for setting policies aiming at more equitable use of resources. We must investigate the intricate relationships and interconnections between gender, politics, policy, environmental exploitation, and the sustainable use of resources across the world.

References

Akwa L.et al (2008). Analysis of Fuel Wood Utilization Among Rural Women. In Akwanga Area of Nasarawa State. Nigeria. The Abuja Journal of Geography and Development. Vol. 1(2).

Mago, P., &Gunwal, I. (2019). Role of women in environment conservation. *Available at SSRN 3368066*.

Mahour, K. (2016). Role of women in environment conservation. *Journal of Advanced Laboratory Research in Biology*, *7*(1), 17-26.

Rao, Manisha (2012).'Ecofeminism at the Crossroads in India: A Review', DEP, 20(12): 124-142.

Raymond E., Wiest Jane S.P., Mocellin D. ThandiweMotsisi, Winnipeg, & Manitoba. (1994). The Needs of Women in Disaster and Emergencies. United Nations Development Programme.

Ress, P. (1992). Women success in Environment Management, UNEP, Our Planet, Vol. 4. No 1. PP 16-18.

Rio, Rio declaration- Ground rules to save the earth, Scavenger, Vol.23, No.3, pp.8, 1992.

Sonkhaskar, J. D. (2020). A role of women globally in Environmental Protection.

Warren, Karen J. (ed) (1994). Introduction. Ecological Feminism. London; New York: Routledge.

INDEX