



International Research Journal of Interdisciplinary & Multidisciplinary Studies (IRJIMS)

A Peer-Reviewed Monthly Research Journal

ISSN: 2394-7969 (Online), ISSN: 2394-7950 (Print)

Volume-II, Issue-I, February 2016, Page No. 39-45

Published by: Scholar Publications, Karimganj, Assam, India, 788711

Website: <http://www.irjims.com>

Gender Socialization and Gender Exclusion: An Analysis

Nipan Haloi

Research Scholar, Assam University, Silchar Campus, Assam, India

Abstract

Gender is socially constructed concept which creates differentiation between women and men in different areas such as work, roles and responsibilities and so on. There is no clear cut definition of the term 'Gender'. Ann Oakley, who was among the first few feminist scholars to use this concept, says the following, 'Gender' is a matter of culture, and it refers to the social classification of men and women into 'masculine' and 'feminine'. And Gender socialization refers to the ways in which society ensures that children learn the appropriate behaviors associated with their beings males or females. It also sets children into different courses in life because they are male or female. Society thus channelizes human behavior through gender socialization. And through the process of gender socialization, gender discrimination has been prevailing in our country from the early days. There are various aspects of gender exclusion and we can discuss these aspects mainly in four areas. These areas are– Family, Society, politics and Economics. So, through this paper an attempt has been made to discuss about the process of gender socialization which helps in the process of gender discrimination in our society.

Key Words: *Gender, Gender socialization, Gender Discrimination, patriarchal societies.*

Introduction: The concept of Gender is one of the most debated issues in present political analysis. Although we have known the word gender in grammar, obviously it is being used differently now. The word gender is now being used sociologically or as a conceptual category, and it has been given a very specific meaning. . The concept of gender, as we now use it came into common parlance during the early 1970s. It is used as an analytical tool to understand social realities with regard to women and men.

Meaning of gender: Gender is socially constructed concept which creates differentiation between women and men in different areas such as work, roles and responsibilities and so on. There is no clear cut definition of the term 'Gender'. According to Kamla Bhasin, “**gender refers to the socio-cultural definition of men and women, the way societies distinguish men and women and assign them social roles.**”

The distinction between sex and gender was introduced to deal with the general tendency to attribute women's subordination to their anatomy. For ages it was believed that the different characteristics, roles and status accorded to women and men in society, are determined by biology (i.e., sex), that they are natural, and therefore not changeable.

Ann Oakley, who was among the first few feminist scholars to use this concept, says the following, “‘Gender’ is a matter of culture, and it refers to the social classification of men and women into ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’.” That people are male or female can usually be judged by referring to biological evidence. That they are masculine or feminine cannot be judged in the same way: the criteria are cultural, differing with time and place. The consistency of sex must be admitted, but so also must the variability of gender. She concludes that gender has no biological origin, that the conception between sex and gender are not really ‘natural’ at all.

The concept of gender enables us to state that sex is one thing, but gender is quite another. Everyone is born male or female, and our sex can be determined simply by looking at our genitalia.

But every culture has its ways of valuing girls and boys and assigning them different roles, responses and attributes. All the social and cultural “packaging” that is done for girls and boys from birth onwards is “Gendering”

Each society slowly transforms a male or female into men or women, into masculine and feminine, with different qualities, behavior patterns, roles, responsibilities, rights and expectations. Unlike sex, which is biological, the gender identities of women and men are psychologically and socially-which means historically and culturally determined.

“One is not born women but becomes one.” This is a famous phrase coined by Simon de’ Beauvoir. This statement underscores the basic distinction between sex and gender.

We can discuss the main difference of these two terms under following ways:

Sex	Gender
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex is natural • Sex is biological. It refers to visible difference in genitalia and related differences in procreative function • Sex is constant, it remains the same everywhere • Sex cannot be changed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender is socio-cultural and it is man made • Gender is socio-cultural and it refers to masculine and feminine qualities, behavior patterns, roles and responsibilities, etc • Gender is variable, it changes from time to time, culture to culture, even family to family • Gender can be changed

Gender Socialization: Gender socialization refers to the ways in which society ensures that children learn the appropriate behaviors associated with their beings males or females. It also sets children into different courses in life because they are male or female. Society thus channelizes human behavior through gender socialization.

A child learns that there are not only biological differences between sexes, but also socially and culturally constructed differences between them. The sex of an individual is a biological construct and refers to male and female distinction between the human species. Gender, on the other hand, is a socially construct and designates masculinity and femininity, the social, psychological and cultural aspects of maleness and femaleness.

Gender differentiation does not come naturally from biological differences. For every new born baby, the family members especially the parents, and the siblings are the significant others who influences and teach everything that is learnt in childhood. At birth, the colour pink is used for girls

and blue for boys to differentiate between the sexes of the babies. Gender socialization thus starts with the birth of an infant. Though the colour pink and blue may not have any meanings for babies and infants, they have social association with gender. As infants grow up, their development pattern diverges on the basis of their sex. Family members, books, television, and schools teach reinforce gender-type expectation and influence the self concepts of individual. Newborn girl babies are often described as ‘cute’, ‘tiny’, ‘soft’, and ‘delicate’, whereas boys are seen as ‘strong’, and ‘hardy’. In the process of growing up, children learn gender-stereotyped characteristics: females are emotional, soft, can be easily conceived, patient, nurturing and caring whereas males are strong, unemotional, rational and logical. This a reflection of the kind of gender socialization that is done during childhood, though this is an unconscious process, and parents are hardly aware that they are reinforcing the typical gender roles and identities on their children.

Gender Socialization and Gender Discrimination: Though there is no consensus concerning the key dimensions of gender inequality, most scholars agree that it is a multidimensional concept composed by several spheres: economic, educational, political, legal, health and family systems. For present purposes, gender inequality can be conceived of as a system that justifies and perpetuates the domination of women by men in all areas of private and public life. This structural system of domination has existed throughout history and has been labeled patriarchy. The most important conceptual point is that gender inequality is grounded in and is maintained by patriarchal structures and ideologies. Gender inequality has been a serious concern in the world and gender differences have some repercussion in relation between men and women. Gender in common usage refers to differences between men and women. Although gender is often used interchangeably with sex and within a social setup it often refers to sexual difference, it is important to understand gender is different from sex. Sex concerns physical and biological differences that distinguish male from the female Culture constructs social differences in gender. These social constructions attach themselves to behaviors, expectations, roles, and representations and sometimes to values and beliefs that are specific to either men or women. Gender differences included do not necessarily have biological component but have socially agreed upon differences meaning those cultures assign that. These constitute the area of gender difference and sometimes these differences create inequality. It means social disparity or disparity of distribution of opportunity.

In India, discriminatory attitude towards men and women have existed for generations and affect the lives of both genders. Although the constitution of India has granted men and women equal rights but gender disparities are still remains.

Different Areas of Gender Exclusion: Women are the backbone of the society. In the words of swami Vivekananda, “That country and that nation which do not respect women have never become great nor will ever in future. So, by these words Vivekananda emphasized the importance of women and also indicate about Gender equality. There are various aspects of gender exclusion and we can discuss these aspects mainly in four areas. These areas are– Family, Society, politics and Economics. These can be discussed under following ways:

1. Family: Charity starts at home. So does women subjugation. The tradition of ‘Stridhan’ got transformed into dowry. Dowry becomes a nightmare for parents. It becomes a real Herculean task for those with limited means. Daughter becomes a burden to their parents. Birth of a daughter in a family was despised. Daughters were ‘parayaadhan’. This is because, their parents would invest all their resources on them and one fine morning they would be married into another family with a substantial amount of dowry. Therefore, daughters were looked down upon. As a result, women

have been facing discrimination in different aspect within the family. Some of these aspects are- Roles and Responsibilities, Decision Making Process, Division of Labour, Health, Food Distribution, Dress, Education, Ownership of Property etc.

- One of the important aspects where gender exclusion found is Roles and Responsibilities. Men are considered to be the heads of the households, bread-winners, owners and manager of property, and active in politics, religion, business and the professions. Women on the other hand are expected and trained to bear and look after children, to nurse the infirm the old, do all households work and so on. This differentiation has made by the family through the socialization process. Apart from that one of the important reasons of gender exclusion of women in the family is 'Reproduction'. In the name reproduction women are compelled to stay at home or to give up their jobs for caring, nurturing their children. But according to Feminist, caring, nurturing of children is not only the responsibilities of women. It is the responsibilities of both the couple.
- Again, decision making process is another important area where gender exclusion is prevalent. We have seen that in the family decision are mostly taken by the male member because they earn money. They are denied participation in the community decision, leaving them with limited rights in the household. In addition, their lack of decision making power and capacity in the public sphere has left them with no chance to influence the market and the state as they are devoid of both economic and political rights.
- Another important aspect where gender discrimination is found is division of labour. The traditional way of thinking upholds the man as the 'breadwinner' and the women as the 'bread maker'. As a result, women are mostly confined to home and busy with household's activities which is regarded as unproductive activities. Again in the agricultural sector, women's productive work is not reflected in economic accounting because it is considered an extension of their household work. For these activities they do not get salary. Therefore they are unable to make themselves economically empowered.
- Another most crucial aspect of gender exclusion within family is 'Health'. Health security is one of the important components of human development. Good health is not only the end product of development, but also a necessary condition for economic development. But in most of the family we have seen that women health is not given more importance. As a result, they face various problems relating to health.
- Again in case of food distribution also women face inequality within family. For example in our society mostly women cook food but they eat after the distribution of the food to all member of the family. Again daughters are not even given nutritious food in comparison to the boy child. As a result they become physically weak and suffer various diseases.
- 'Dress' is also another important aspect in which women face discrimination within family. Girls and boys, women and men dress differently in most societies. In some places this difference may be minimal, at others very stark. In some communities women are made to cover their bodies from top to toe, including their faces. The mode of dress can and does influence the mobility, sense of freedom and dignity of people.
- Women are the indispensable part of a society. Education has been recognized as an essential agent of social change and development in any society. Hence, to think of harmonious development without educating women is impossibility. Moreover it can be rightly said that to educate a women is to educate the whole family. As we know that the development of future generation mainly depends upon the education of women section. But

the Hindu religion holds the belief that the boy child is the savior of the parents who can drag the parents and other ancestors from hell and the girl child is married to another family. So they should not be given more importance for higher education. As a result they find difficulties for getting a suitable job.

- Another important aspect of gender exclusion in the family is ‘Ownership of Property’. Generally in the patriarchal society, women do not enjoy economic rights. As we have seen that women had to depend upon men- before marriage, women should be protected by their fathers, after marriage by their husbands and during old age by their sons. Therefore, women loss their property rights in the whole life.

2. Society: In society discrimination takes place at all levels. Almost all the spaces gender discrimination is widespread such as taking traditional rules and regulation, religious institution, caste, class, ethnic groups and also in the educational institution. But it has to be noted that all women are not subordinate to all men in society. For instance, a rich women because of her class affiliation, is in a position to dominate the men who work for her as domestic help. In this case a women class is more important. In other cases, a “lower” caste/ class women may be doubly exploited by an upper caste/ class men. For example, in some communities in India, a caste bride is obliged to spend her first night as married women with the upper class landlord.

Similarly, there may be differences between people belonging to different races or ethnic groups. “Upper” caste women generally face more restriction on their mobility than “lower” caste women because they have to preserve caste purity and superiority. Generally speaking, “Upper caste are much more male dominated or patriarchal because they are concerned about caste purity as well as patrimony or or controlling property. This is why “upper” caste families impose restriction of dress and mobility on their women, thereby controlling women’s sexuality. Because “lower” caste has no purity to safeguard their women are not similarly restrained.

Apart from that the existence of separate personal law based on different religions also allows gender discrimination of women. For instance, Muslim personal law allows polygamy and unilateral divorce for men; Christian law does not recognize adultery by a man as cause for divorce; the Hindu code does not allow adoption of children by parents of two different religions and so on. And all religious laws favour men in matters relating to property rights and inheritance. But it can be said that this gender differentiation does not come naturally, through socialization process this discrimination has been imposed in the name of traditional values, caste, and custom etc.

3. Politics: Another important area of gender discrimination against women is “Politics”. This discrimination can be seen on several aspects such as political participation, political representation, political decision making and suffrage and voting behaviors etc.

“Political power is the strongest weapon to empower women, but it is in the sector of politics that women all over the world are lagging behind men. This is due to the fact that the state machinery had been a creation of man and since its inception, women were kept outside it” (Baruah, S.L., 2003). Political participation depends on the political system. Apart from that education plays the key role in the entry of women in politics. So, if we look at the present status of political participation of women in India, it is still far from satisfactory. Despite having the great role in politics of pre-independent period the number of participation of women in politics remained very low in post independent period.

The world Development Report team of 2012 of the World Bank has found that “women do vote, but they don't enter or progress in formal political institutions as much as men” (WDR-2012). Even after so many attempts made for reducing gender gaps worldwide women political participation has not marked up to the expectation level which is considered as an important component of gender equality.

This scenario can be seen under following table:

**Table 1:
Percentage of women in Parliament**

Country	1990	2010
World	13	19
High income country	12	23
Middle income country	13	17
Low middle income country	13	18
India	5	11
Pakistan	10	22
China	21	21
Rwanda	17	56
Sweden	38	45
Norway	36	40
Finland	32	40
Netherlands	21	41
France	7	19
Us	7	17
Uk	6	22
Iraq	11	25

Source: Deka Rani Mudiari, 2013, political participation of women in Assam, Janaccintan volume-I

So, from this table we can get a clear picture about the weak representation of women in Parliaments which are known as the highest body of all kinds of decision making except a few country. Moreover India's position is also not satisfactory at all.

4. Economics: Another important area of gender discrimination is economics. In this area gender discrimination is seen in different aspects such as works, jobs and position, in the market sector, Income etc. It can be said that to make women economically powerful employment is very important for them. But as we have seen that although women perform almost all the household labour and a considerable portion of socially productive labour yet, women's labour contribution has not been recognized, nor has it been given due remuneration and respect. With industrialization and monetization of the economy, women's labour burden has increased, though this is not reflected in their share of the income. Women's wages tend to be lower than wages for corresponding work by men. Much of women's labour is non-waged since it is categorized as household labour, even when it is for market consumption. Consequently, even if women's share of work is larger, and this is true of most societies, their share of income is lower. (Assam Human Development Report 2003).

Conclusion: Through this discussion it can be said that there are various reasons for gender discrimination in our society. And one of the most important reasons is the process of gender

socialization. And it can be said that gender discrimination is not only limited to only one areas it can be seen in every aspect of their life starting from the family to all areas such as society, politics, economics, educational institution, community, media, religion etc. So, to change the attitude of society towards women the children should be socialized properly without gender bias. Moreover, the educational institution also has to play a good role in changing the attitude of the individual.

References

1. Arya, Anita. *Indian women Education and Empowerment*. Volume two. Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi 110 002, 2000.
2. Arivastav, R. Empowerment of women through political participation with special reference to Madhya Pradesh, in *women in Indian Politics*, Gyan. Publishing House, New Delhi–110002.
3. Barrie, Levy. *Women and Violence*. Seal Press. Berkeley, California, 2008.
4. Biswal, Tapan. *Human Rights Gender and Environment*. Viva books. New Delhi.
5. Bhasin, Kamla. (2000). *Understanding Gender. Kali for Women*. New Delhi-110020.
6. Deka, Rani Mudiari. Political Participation of Women in Assam. Janachintan published department of political science, volume– I, 2013.
7. Desai, Neera. (1975). *Women in Modern India*. New Delhi: National Book Trusts.
8. Dutta, A.R. (Ed.) *Human Security in North East India: Issue and Policies* Anwasha, India 2009.
9. Finalay, Barbara. *Before The Second Wave*. Pearson, New Delhi.2008.
10. Mukherjee Upasana; (2009), *Gender Justice*, Legal Service India.com.
11. Narzary, Mamata. Women’s marginal role in politics with special reference to Assam, *Global Research Methodology Journal*, Vol-II, 8th issue, Feb-Mar-Apr, 2013.
12. Menon, Nivedita. *Gender and Politics in India*. Oxford university press.
13. Oak, A.W. (1988). *Status of Women in Education*. Ambala Cant: The Indian Publication.
14. Pilcher, Jane& Whelehan, Imelda. *50 Key Concepts in Gender Studies*. Sage Publication. New Delhi. 2004.
15. Priyam, Manisha, Menon Krishna, Banerjee Madhulika. *Human Rights, Gender and the Environment*. Pearson. Delhi.
16. Saikia, Rashmi Rekha. Women and Development. Annual journal Vol- II 2014 Women cell, ACTA, Assam.
17. Singh Vijay Pal; (2014), *Gender Justice in India*, Legal Service India.com
18. Thakuria, Dharitri, Women Empowerment and Human Development in the context of Assam, Janachintan published department of political science, volume– I, 2013
19. “Women: Striving in an unequal world” in Assam- Human Development Report, 2003.
20. Zaman, Baruah, Kalita. *Contemporary Political Issues*. Assam Book Depot. Panbazar, Guwahati, 2014.