



Continuous Issue - 19 | August - September 2015

Gender Equality: Its Roots and Remedies

'92 women raped in India every day, 4 in Delhi.'

According to figures released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the total number of rape cases reported in India has gone up to 33,707 in 2013 from 24,923 in 2012.

The data also unveiled a disturbing fact that in the majority of the cases, the offenders were known to the victims. NCRB statistics shows that in 94 per cent of the cases the offenders were familiar to the accused.

According to a latest report prepared by India's National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), a crime has been recorded against women in every three minutes in India. Every 60 minutes, two women are raped in this country. Every six hours, a young married woman is found beaten to death, burnt or driven to suicide.

These are just a few news!

In fact, India will never get exact figure of crime against women because Indian society is close and strongly covered with fragile cloth of Ijrat (Reputation) and fear of what will people say? especially in case of women. This society has separate social, political, economical and religious rules for woman. In fact Woman is a thing to be enjoyed, to be ruled upon and to be trained to remain weak mentally and physically. Thus, women have been objectified and instrumentalized by forcefully imposed social norms and torturing traditions.

This condition of women instigates many questions. Few are – why do men objectify woman? What makes these males think like that? Is it natural or cultural? If it is natural then how can the idea of feminism prop up in the mind of a man! The word 'feminism' is coined by François

Marie Charles Fourier, a French philosopher and an influential early socialist thinker, in 1837. In India, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Iswarchandra Vidyasagar initiated the process of social reformation on the issues related to women condition like Satipratha and widow- remarriage. During freedom movement it was Mohandas K. Gandhi who inspired women to come out of four walls and join the freedom movement. So its thinking which makes man to think like man and woman to think like woman. So it is all about conditioning of mind.

Thus Gender is also conditioning of mind. Nature has made woman different by making her different than man biologically, but patriarchal society has created vast difference by conceptualizing woman in the mind of men, thus gender is a cultural, sociological and psychological concept in India. Indian society has set rules for women to follow so that she can be considered good by patriarchal society, and Indian woman has willingly or unwillingly accepted what they are said. They are so engrossed with past ideals that till date these women have never defined their own law book, they still follow the ideal of Sita given by Valmiki, a male. Indian women want change or revolution in the way they are looked at but for that they are taking help of Western idea of Feminism. Why can't Indian woman think on her own? In act Indian woman has to start thinking on cultural specific Feminism.

Idea must be constructive not destructive, it should give a way for building a healthy society where women and man can build beautiful life. India has her own cultural concepts and only truly educated woman can understand what to discard and what not from Indian culture. There is need of creating free society where each one of us understands the meaning of responsible freedom as Freedom has

its limit. Each person of the society carries individual and social responsibility. This study aims at practically creating beautiful society by psychologically attacking the mind of the people and thus nurturing it in such a way that male can see woman as a human being rather than just an object or instrument, or property.

Gender Perception and Ancient Scriptures: (Manusmriti & Ramayana)

Perceiving one's self or the other is the matter of conditioning. In Vedic literature there is no reference of degraded woman's status in the society. The reference of woman's degrading status in the society is found from Ramayana and Manusmriti. So the definite time of the beginning of deteriorating condition of woman is from the time of Ramayana. Besides a good piece of literature Ramayana is also considered as one of Hindu's religious book. If Ramayana shows beating of wife by a husband, or Maryada Purushottam Ram is exiling his pregnant wife from home, then the people who are considering Ram as God and Sita as goddess they will definitely follow them as Hindu philosophy is all about individual comfort. From the verses of Ramayan as written by Mr. Tulsi Das, "Dhol, ganwar, shudra, pashu, naari- Ye sab tadan ke adhikari," one may easily draw inferences as to what status has been granted to women. The story of Ramayana and act of Sita and Ram are closely connected with Indian mindset. That is why, besides tradition, culture, lack of proper education; mythological books and some scripture have played a very crucial role in conditioning minds of the generations of people. Our blood and veins are deeply rooted in our Dharmik sets of beliefs. It goes to such an extent that if we go against it our conscience hurt. Especially women, they are also not able to accept change. Most of the women have themselves accepted their subordinate role, they don't question set tradition and do not allow the young to question.

The young generation is adopting easily adaptable things from the West, but is not adopting intellectual mindset/logical mind of the West, because of which the young are found in the middle of deep and dark ocean, they don't know how to swim and they just imitate. So this is the high time to direct young generation, to question set traditions and enkindle in them their pivotal role for building better society and carry social responsibilities. The most dangerous root of gender inequality is in Manusmriti, a Hindu law book where women have been given laws to follow. Examples from Manusmriti,

"Balye pitorvashay....." - 5/151. Girls are supposed to be in the custody of their father when they are children, women must be under the custody of their husband when married and under the custody of her son as widows. In no circumstances is she allowed to assert herself independently. An example of curbing freedom of woman to live her life the way she wants and it also proves that women are dependant clause and they cannot act independently. And therefore she requires continuous protection from a male.

"Asheela kamvrto....." - 5/157. Men may be lacking virtue, be sexual perverts, immoral and devoid of any good qualities, and yet women must constantly worship and serve their husbands. Pati parmashvaray namh: kind of idea. Woman do not have space to think about herself.

Mr. Gandhi who brought about change in women's thinking by liberating woman from four walls during freedom movements in India. He condemns Manusmriti. (The blemishes referred to by the Mahatma as obtained in Manusmriti can be found in Chapter IX which deals with the Eternal Laws for Husband and Wife.) He emphasizes,

I must say that every Indian women and men must read Manusmriti to know what great damage it has done to women and Indian society. (Ref. Manusmriti translated by George

Dr. Ambedkar also condemns 'Manusmriti' the ancient Hindu Code-book. He said that the status granted to women in Manusmriti is quite at par with the animals and slave by the proprietors of Hindu Dharma. Such was the placement earmarked to our mothers and sisters that the heads of humanity bend down with shame!

That is why Dr. Ambedkar said that in the name of sanskaras, the Hindu women are tied up with the bondage of superstitions, which they carry till their death. Shastras are also responsible for inculcating wrong notions learnt by them through baseless traditions and preaching in the budding minds of girls.

Dr. Ambedkar brought Hindu Code Bill, 1926 but it was opposed by Higher caste Hindus only. Saying it is an absurd appeal against the basic Hindu laws that were governed by Dharmasastra (the textual

authority on issues of marriage, adoption, inheritance in Hindu code). Though finally the act passed in segments, Anti-domestic violence act, 2005, Hindu Succession act, 1956 amended in 2005 and gave right to equal inheritance to the daughter also.

Need of Rewriting Sita-Ramayan:

Valmiki has described the role of Sita as an ideal wife in Ramayana as per male's point of view. Sita may be an ideal creation of Valmiki to direct Indian women of that age to help and serve the social structure and system. Though life of Sita who is considered to be an ideal was not at all a happy one, she remains the ideal woman for generations and she has become a vehicle to propagate the patriarchal values that is to bear all injustice silently. Ramayana was written thousand years back with time values have been changed so also woman's thinking. Woman has got education and they have their own feelings and stand, so it is high time to write Sitayana for directing educated women for the betterment of the society. If it will be revised and written from an intellectual woman's point of view we can expect a good condition of future woman in India. Film maker Rajkumar Santoshi for example has honestly and realistically portrayed the episode of Agnipariksha in the movie Lajja. Who knows, If Valmiki might have characterized Sita with questioning argument at the time of Agnipariksha the present scenario would have been different! If young girls of India will not get any ideal, they will continue to follow old Sita or modern film's Hollywood photocopied heroines of Indian cinema/reel women who is quite far from real life!

Socialization Process and Parents:

Women and men today and yesterday think, perceive and act differently. The reason is – they are socialized in that way by their parents. Girl child and boy child are differently treated by their parents. For example, girl will be given toys like dolls, kitchen utensil, they are not allowed to play out door games like, football, cricket, so they are confined to play ghar gokhla, while boys will be given pistol, car, bat and ball, and lots of freedom to play outside boundaries. A boy cannot cry because crying is a characteristic related to the weak. And it is normal for girl to cry because woman is weak. The belief of not spending much for girl's education is still prevalent in many houses of India because girl is parki thapan she is going to another's(husband's) house so parents will not spend much on their daughter's education though she is brilliant than their son. Even girls are not made aware of their responsibilities. Only few girls study with the accountability of doing something extra ordinary in their career life otherwise most of the girls are Painted ship upon Painted ocean no thoughts of their own, Just printed mindset of their parents and tradition(willing to write their degree in her marriage invitation card). Because of their different treatment they acquire divergent identities and expectations and for most of the children their parents are the ideals they want to follow. So parents have to be careful and cautious in giving treatment to their girl and boy child. There is no meaning behind blindly following traditions. Honor established ideas if they are acceptable otherwise reject them. For acceptance and rejection of the ideas one has to be educated properly.

Indian Cinema and Woman:

One can easily observe two divergent development of woman mindset. Those who are educated and financially independent are developing different mindset and those who are not are still living under crushing condition. In objectifying woman Indian cinema is playing vital role. Earlier the camera in the movie was on the face of a heroine but now the focus has changed from face to body. Item song has become a trend of Indian Cinema and the word item is used for woman. Ridiculously, film actresses are performing item songs dancing and exposing their body to arouse unwanted feeling in the mind of men. In most of the item songs these item girls are surrounded by only male crowd. This creates powerful impact on men to look at woman like an object. Common men can not differentiate between marketing strategies and real life and that creates negative impact of woman on man.

Secondly, heroine in the movie is just reduced to being a glamorous component of the films, dancing around the trees, being kidnapped , raped or killed. Means they are not strong enough to protect themselves so she needs a hero to protect her from a villain.

Very few films are made in which heroines are performing a role of strong women who can raise their voice against injustice, who can rebel in their own way and take their stand.

Most of the Hindi films heroines are distanced from the Indian woman of real life. There is no Indian woman ethics shown in the movie, the Hindi film heroines go for premarital sex, adultery, sexual

overture where the woman takes the initiative are quite common. But it is far away for real Indian woman though we have accepted it happily. And young generation has started following it unknowingly. So instead of copying Hollywood concepts Indian film directors have to create cultural specific analysis and project Indian heroine in a set up where Indian woman really lives.

Folk Tales:

Indian folk tales of kings and princess depict the famous declarations of King that is to give away half of the property of the state along with his daughter to any person who solves the problem of the king in which he has stuck in.

The fight for women's rights in India is usually concentrated on crimes which are generally propagated against them such as dowry, rape, sexual harassment, domestic violence, female infanticide and the like, but never have the Women's organizations in India questioned the basis of discrimination in the Indian society. The roots of all the crimes against women lie in the fact that they have been treated as property instead of being treated as human beings. The only proof that has ever been provided for this bias has been the Holy Scriptures such as the Ramayana and Manusmriti, parents mindsets, and the most recent is- Indian cinema. It's high time when we started questioning our beliefs and assessing them on the basis of merit. First of all it must be reckoned that scriptures aren't written by Gods but by mortals who described the laws and rules widely prevalent in their time. With the passage of time and the continuous evolution of the society these rules have become obsolete and need to be re- evaluated. Parents have to revitalize their thinking pattern and Indian Cinema, a giant industry has to play constructive role in area of woman emancipation.

According to J. Krishnamurti,

We act according to opinion, according to memory; we are a whole series of conditioned responses, memories, and traditions. Our action and our morality are based on what has been or what will be, and our thinking, which is obviously the basis of our action, is almost mechanical; most of us are like machines in what we do. You give a machine certain information, and it gives you certain responses; similarly, we receive certain information through our senses and then respond. So, our thinking and our activities are almost mechanical, and this mechanical thinking with its responses and activity we call "living."

Today is the perfect time to bring about **Educational Revolution** in India through digital media, through books, through lectures, conferences, through street plays. Attack children's mind with cartoon films, youngsters with movie, and old age people with mythological background and thus create a psychological concept of gender equality.

If we want to gift a beautiful culture and society, where woman can live fearlessly then psychologically attacking the mind of a common man is the best option.

- Start working on mass appeal, like writing epic SitaRamayana from Sita's point of view by a woman. (An effort has been made by a Bengali author, Candrabarti's Ramayana) Giving elaborate description of Draupadi's arguments and strong denial against accepting her husband's decision to consider her as his property while gambling. The episode of Vstraharan must be removed from Mahabharat.
- Revitalizing Indian cinema. Movie on woman emancipation should be given better platform. Till now only few movies like Mirch Masala, Damini and Lajja can be considered good showcasing woman's value and fight against male patriarchy are made.
- Uphold morality and broad cast TV serial with lots of responsibilities and not just entertainment because it affects lot many house wives who are scheduling their house hold chores with the time of TV serials, they don't question they just accept the dressing, thinking and life styles of the TV actors far away from reality.
- Educate Parents to educate their children without discrimination between male and female, as there is no school better than home and there is no teacher better than parents.
- Design syllabus of the schools where children start to learn to look at each other as human being.
- Government has already started the process of uplifting woman by supporting her with various laws. But many times we fail to implement it. So implement it sincerely and convince other to do so.
- Encourage financial independence of woman along with nurturing home and her children.

- Responsible writing of novels. Novels should be written to bring positive change in the society like for example, Devi Chaudhurani (Bengali: দেবী চৌধুরানী) is a Bengali novel written by Bankim Chandra Chatterji and published in 1884. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devi_Chaudhurani) in which Bankim Chandra saw the struggle being led by a woman, the protagonist, in a time when most women remained behind purdah and did not even show her face to men outside her immediate family. This was a tremendous inspiration to scores of women who gradually came out of their homes and actively joined the independence struggle in the decades to come. (According to Hindustan Times list of the greatest Indian English Novels only 5 are written in last 15 years rest are the production of 80s or 90s.) It seems there is scarcity of good Indian writing in English, purpose has changed drastically.
- Comics describing Woman as superhero. For example, Priya. (Priya by Ram Devineni who is of the opinion that Sexual violence is not a legal issue but a cultural problem. He has created a female superhero to tackle the cases of rape.



- Most importantly, it is women who have to discard the burden of being called Devi (goddess), and accept their down to earth role of living breathing human being who have thoughts to share and heart and mind to feel. So now it is time for women to decide how a woman must lead her life and not the others.

Nonetheless, gender inequality has been declining in every modern society and this decline has dramatically altered the circumstances of both women and men in the most advanced transitions so to preserve whatever is best in Indian culture we need to give a right direction to the speed of declining gender inequality and various roles an individual has to perform towards family, society and Nation at large. Thus our goal is to reach to the level where we start looking at each other as human beings, born to cherish good life and to help one another.

REFERENCES :

1. Nandela, Krishna. "Gandhi on Women's Empowerment".
2. Anand, Ashay. "An essay on the mythical roots of gender bias in India"
3. <http://www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/report-hindu-succession-act-girls-born-before-2005-law-change-now-have-equal-rights-to-property-too-2010948>
4. <http://www.nyu.edu/classes/jackson/future.of.gender/Readings/DownSoLong--Persistence&Origins.pdf>
5. http://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/conf_achgapwomen_schneider.pdf
6. <http://www.nyu.edu/classes/jackson/future.of.gender/Readings/DownSoLong--Persistence&Origins.pdf>
7. <http://newswise.com/articles/what-are-the-roots-of-gender-inequality-women-s-rights-race-and-reproduction>
8. <http://www.manushi.in/docs/906-when-women-Retell-the-ramayan.pdf>
9. <https://oorvazifilmeducation.wordpress.com/tag/portrayal-of-women-in-indian-cinema/>
10. <http://www.recentscientific.com/sites/default/files/2340.pdf>
11. <http://www.journal.su.ac.th/index.php/suij/article/viewFile/433/448>
12. <http://www.jkrishnamurti.org/krishnamurti-teachings/view-text.php?tid=352&chid=4672>
13. <http://www.swamivivekanandaquotes.org/2013/04/swami-vivekananda-quotes-on-women.html>
14. http://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/womens_empowerment.htm
15. <http://www.hindustantimes.com/brunch-stories/greatest-indian-novels-ever-part-i/article1-1231662.aspx>
16. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Fourier

Dr. Dharitri R. Gohel
Assistant Professor (English)

Government Engineering College, Modasa

Copyright © 2012 - 2016 KCG. All Rights Reserved. | Powered By : Knowledge Consortium of Gujarat