

Gender Discrimination and Childhood

Dr Seema Thakur

Himachal Pradesh University

Abstract

Any person is expected to act on the basis of his/her gender immediately after he/she is born. Being a boy or girl is natural in which we ourselves cannot make any changes. But when a boy or a girl born, their actions are divided by the society. Since ancient times, this distinction has been observed. Any person when born as men or women naturally has some of their own qualities like girls being gentle and fragile are their natural nature. But it is not that woman cannot become a form of power. History witnesses that women have been instrumental in advancing Indian Culture. Historically, women not only learned such a technique as fencing, horseback riding but also showed their strength in the battle ground when needed.

Key Words: Gender, Discrimination, Childhood

(Gender Equality):

Gender Equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development.

Any person is expected to act on the basis of his/her gender immediately after he/she is born. Being a boy or girl is natural in which we ourselves cannot make any changes. But when a boy or a girl born, their actions are divided by the society. Since ancient times, this distinction has been observed. Any person when born as men or women naturally has some of their own qualities like girls being gentle and fragile are their natural nature. But it is not that woman cannot become a form of power. History witnesses that women have been instrumental in advancing Indian Culture. Historically, women not only learned such a technique as fencing, horseback riding but also showed their strength in the battle ground

Gender:

Gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/ time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context. Other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis include class, race, poverty level, ethnic group and age.¹

People tend to use the terms "sex" and "gender" interchangeably. But, while connected, the two terms are not equivalent. Generally, we assign a newborn's sex as either male or female (some US states and other countries offer a third option) based on the baby's genitals. Once a sex is assigned, we presume the child's gender. For some people, this is cause for little, if any, concern or further thought because their gender aligns with gender-related ideas and assumptions associated with their sex. Nevertheless, while gender may begin with the assignment of our sex, it doesn't end there. A person's gender is the complex interrelationship between three dimensions: body, identity, and social gender.

Body: our body, our experience of our own body, how society genders bodies, and how others interact with us based on our body.

Identity: the name we use to convey our gender based on our deeply held, internal sense of self. Identities typically fall into binary (e.g. man, woman) no binary (e.g., gender queer, gender fluid, etc) or engender (e.g., a gender, genderless) categories. The meaning associated with a particular identity can vary among individuals using the same term. A person's gender identity can correspond to or differ from the sex they were assigned at birth.

Social gender: how we present our gender in the world and how individuals, society, culture, and community perceive, interact with, and try to shape our gender. Social gender includes gender roles and expectations and how society uses those to try to enforce conformity to current gender norms.

Each of these dimensions can vary greatly across a range of possibilities and is distinct from, but interrelated with, the others. A person's comfort in their gender is related to the degree to which these three dimensions feel in harmony.ⁱⁱ

A "gender-equal society" is a "society in which both men and women, as equal members, have the opportunity to participate in all kinds of social activities at will, equally enjoy political, economical and cultural benefits, and share responsibilities." In such a society, the human rights of men and women are equally respected. Women who desire an active role in society may participate in activities of their own choosing, while men could enjoy a fulfilling home and community life. A gender-equal society is a society built by men and women as equal partners.

The realization of a truly affluent society is dependent on the establishment of a social framework that allows individuals to choose various lifestyles regardless of their gender, and without being bound by such rigid, stereotyped gender roles that assume that child rearing and nursing are exclusively women's duties, while men are the workers, tax-payers and pension renderers who support the nation. In reality, however, although gender equality has more or less been achieved in Japan as far as laws and legislations are concerned, women's participation in the policy- and decision-making processes remains insufficient, and women still have few opportunities to realize their full potential. The traditional tendency to view men's participation in housework and child-rearing as unmanly and the heavy burden of housework, child care and nursing that is still placed on women testify to the fact that Japan is lagging behind other countries in terms of gender equality.ⁱⁱⁱ

Gender discrimination and women's low status are at the root of women's limited autonomy and of the denial of their rights to health and bodily integrity: when women suffer poor mental and physical health and limited decision-making power this, in turn, impacts negatively on their children's survival, healthy growth and development. Gender discrimination with son preference means that young girls receive less nutrition, opportunities to play and access early learning than young boys. Furthermore, it is during their first years that girls and boys learn gendered attitudes and expectations, from parents, caregivers, other family members and teachers, about how girls and boys/women and men should behave, their social worth and what their role is in society.^{iv}

There have been innumerable viranganai who have wrought iron on their talents against the perception of society. But still socially there is a distinction between man and woman, even today; many daughters are killed in the womb in the desire for a son. Happiness is that as NFHS 2019-21, the sex ratio in India is at 1020 women per 1000 men. Gender has a profound impact on society. Somewhere the economic, socio-cultural status, health, education and empowerment are influenced by the perceptions prevailing in the society.

From the birth to death of a person, he or she is divided by the society on the basis of sex. A line of action is drawn for a person as soon as he is born. The society creates the distinction of being a boy or a girl in the children from the very childhood. What to eat what to wear, what kind of dress to choose and what should be his life, gait and gradient, it is decided by the society. Society also decides if a boy is born what business he should do or if a girl is born what profession she should choose.

In childhood, children's games are also made based on gender. Toys are also divided on the basis of sex. From the choice of clothing colors to children's bags, shoes, hairstyles; everything is divided by sex. When gender inequality is visible in the society, than we all talk about changing it but do not try to know what the root cause of it is.

Unless we knowingly or unknowingly bring gender equality in our behaviour, society finds it difficult to get out of inequality. After all, why do we tie childhood in fetters? After all, why do not let the boy or girl choose to play, color, cloths, toys laugh and cry as per their wish. Indian constitution gives equal rights to both men and women. According to this, no one can be discriminated against on the basis of sex.

Conclusion

A country can only move forward when both men and women are considered equal and both are given equal opportunities to move forward in the society. But empowerment also doesn't mean that we women begin to abuse our rights and by imitating Western culture, destroy our own identity. From childhood, the negative impact on the child's mind will have to reduce. What will happen if the child chooses a toy of his / her choice or chooses clothes of his own free will? Let them clear themselves. Let them play what they want to play. Teach both housework, teach to respect each other. Every human being has his own emotions we must not eliminate by binding them in social bonds. We cannot achieve the goal of equality until the discrimination in the son and daughter is eliminated. We have to start with our home. The supervision of children, education and their rites determine the direction of society. Through education, society has to be made aware against gender discrimination.

ⁱ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm>

ⁱⁱ <https://genderspectrum.org/articles/understanding-gender>

ⁱⁱⁱ https://www.gender.go.jp/english_contents/about_danjo/toward/society/index.html

^{iv} <https://plan-international.org/publications/gender-inequality-and-early-childhood-development/>

