

Discrimination At The Foundation: The Low Presence Of Women In Higher Learning And Work Spaces In India

Dr. Vijaya Lakshmi V.¹, Dr.H.Vageeshan²

¹Assistant professor in Management Studies , G.Narayanamma Institute of Technology and Science, Shaikpet, Hyderabad, Telangana
<lakshmivagi@gmail.com>

¹ Assistant Professor in Political Science NALSAR UNIVERSITY of LAW, Hyderabad, Telangana. <vagpolitics@nalsar.ac.in>

ABSTRACT

The modern idea of liberal equality seeks for non-discrimination on the basis of ascribed values associated with birth and misfortune which are not associated with agency driven volition of the individual. Democratic republics of the world generally espouse the values of non-discrimination which include gender justice. The Democratic republican constitution of India is not an exception to the rule. But putting the precepts in to practice is a very formidable challenge.

India has long civilization continuity and also structurally inbuilt inequalities. The emancipative struggles against inequality and lack of freedom in the social and cultural realm were more manifest from 19th century along with the struggles for political economic emancipation from the colonial yoke. Since the formation of democratic republic efforts are on to reduce gender discrimination and build gender party at the policy and statutory level s. Since 1970s national polices were made for women. In spite of all this there is a stark gap between genders which is compounded reticence in the socio-cultural realm. Tardy progress of statutory equality and visible discrimination and underrepresentation of women in the learning and work spaces is evidently visible and seems to be deeply embedded. The empirical evidences are not in favour gender justice to say the least.

This paper looks into the gender gap two spaces in the public sphere in India namely the higher education and higher work spaces. It attempts to explain the reasons for such state of affairs

and possible short term and medium term measures to reduce such gap.

Key words: Democracy and Gender-gap, Liberal equality and Gender Justice, Women in Higher Education, Women in the higher level work spaces.

INTRODUCTION

Vision for Freedom and Equality

Presence of diversity in various public spheres, which reflects and represents various strands of socio economic, is a sign of healthy society and polity. Such a reflection is a testimony of working the modern idea of liberal equality in practice. The modern idea of liberal equality seeks for non-discrimination on the basis of ascribed values associated with birth and misfortune which are not associated with the agency driven volition of the individual(**Kymilka2002**). Democratic republics of the world generally espouse the values of non-discrimination which also include gender justice. The Democratic republican constitution of India is not an exception to this rule. But putting the precepts in to practice is a very formidable challenge. All the constitutional democracies across the world attempts to grapple with this challenge.

India is one among the traditional societies which has long civilizational continuity and also suffering with structurally inbuilt inequalities. Patriarchy and its concomitant menaces like discriminatory hierarchies of Varna –Jati order has raised odds against women multiple ways. The problems associated with the gender inequality traditionally also known as ‘Women’s Question’ had been there for the past few centuries. The emancipative struggles against inequality and lack of freedom in the social and cultural realm were more manifest from 19th century along with the struggles for political economic emancipation from the colonial yoke.(**Majumdar 2010**)

Efforts of the Republic

The founding figures of democratic republic of India were aware of the situation and there were debates about providing rights to women without discrimination in many cases, but the emphasis was not on the equality thus the emphasis was more on the ‘rights discourse’ than on the ‘principles of equality’ (Bhatia 2015).None the less the constitution makers provided for rights for all without

discrimination and also provided provisions equal opportunity. The Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy provided in the constitution reveal the intent of the state apparatus to provide equal right to women and elevate their status in the society.

Number of constitutional and legal provisions followed since the since the formation of democratic republic. Efforts are on to reduce gender discrimination and build gender parity at various levels through status backed by the policies(**MSOPI GOI**).In the 1970s on efforts took a pace in designing national policy for women.

The Surge form the1970s

After more than two decades of the journey of the constitutional republic the union government want to take stock of the status of women in India in education and employment. These two areas are very important for the upward mobility and empowerment of women. A look at the terms of reference to the committee appointed to prepare a report on the status of women reveals that by that time the progress in the direction of realisation of rights enshrined in the constitution was very slow (**CSWI GOI 1975**). In a wayIndia started taking stock of the situation of women in the country well before the 1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDWA1979) which came into force 1981. India is a signatory of CEDAW 1979.

In tune with the national international developments by 1985 A departments of women and Child development was created under the Ministry of Human Resource Development. In 1990 by an act of Parliament National Commission for Women (NCW) was established with a mission "To strive towards enabling women to achieve equality and equal participation in all spheres of life by securing her due rights and entitlements through suitable policy formulation, legislative measures, effective enforcement of laws, implementation of schemes/policies and devising strategies for solution of specific problems/situations arising out of discrimination and atrocities against women"(NCW -2021)

In 2006 a Separate Union Ministry of Women (MOWCD) and Child Development was formed. Many state Governments had Women and Child Welfare Ministries in their states even before the Union Government made a separate ministry In spite of all these efforts there is a stark gap between genders which is compounded reticence in the sociocultural realm and a lack of empathy in the

vast private economic sector. Tardy progress of statutory equality and visible discrimination and underrepresentation of women in the learning and work spaces and the decision making is evidently visible and seems to be deeply embedded. The empirical evidences are not in favour gender justice to say the least.

The ground reality:

In the year 2015 there was a stock taking of situation of women empowerment by a High Level Committee on Women which was constituted by MOWCD. Taking a look at adverse Child Sex Ratio(CSR), which is standing at is at an all-time low of 914 girls to a 1000 boys, as a parameter of serious concern the report highlights it as national shame which spreading across urban ,rural and tribal India . According to the report out of the total 640 districts in the country, 429 have experienced decline in CSR. **(HLCW-GOI2015).**

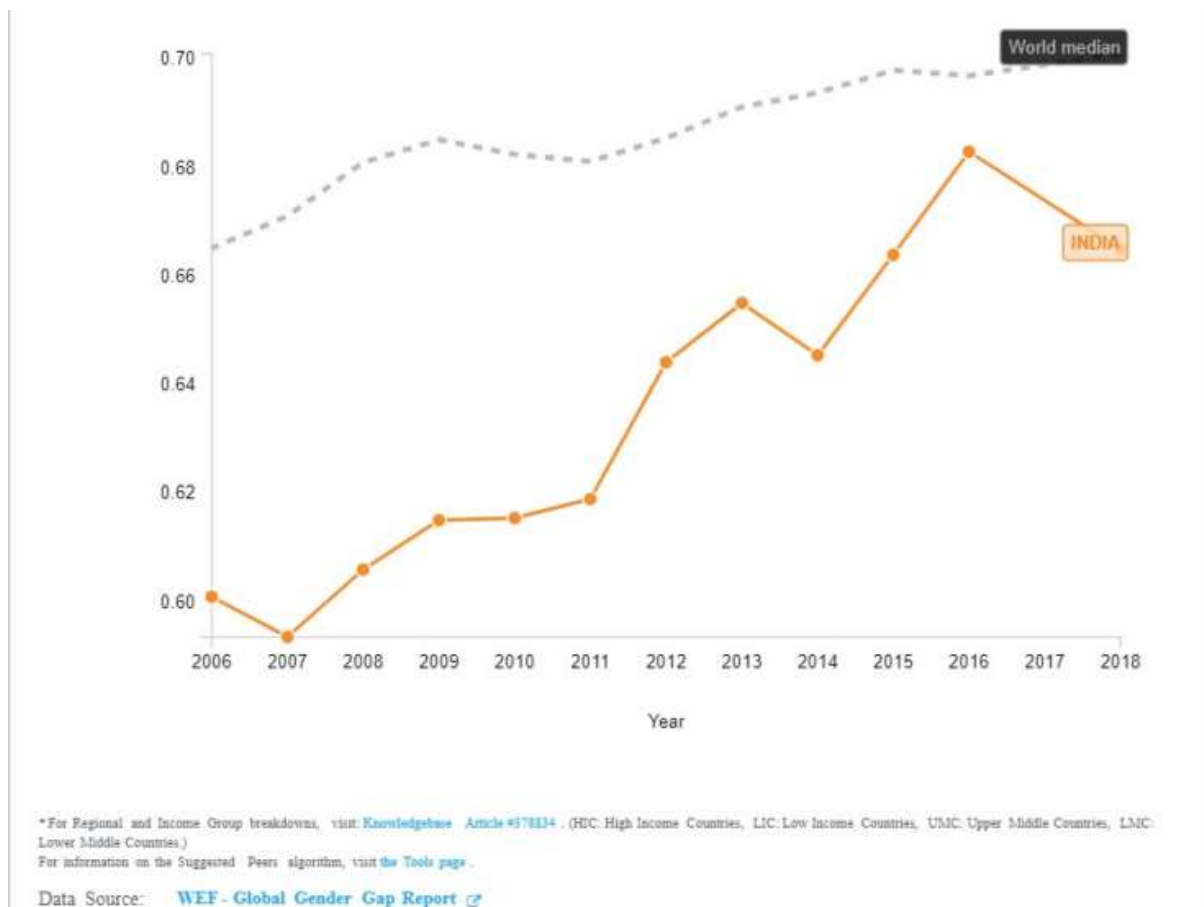
The next problem faced by the Indian women is the endemic cycle of violence. Foundations for this vicious reality lay deep in the misogynistic mind-set entrenched in the social and psychological level. Valence Against Women (VAW) bogs down the progress of women in various public spheres. The High Level Committee report took serious cognisance of this problem. Following table gives the glimpse of the problem in a more systematically. Violence is affecting the personal, intimate and work world of the women adversely.

Stage 1	Foeticide and infanticide	Where there is an economic or cultural preference for sons, the pregnancy diagnostic tools can lead to female foeticide
Stage2	School going age	Many Girls are not given the access to and completion of proper primary and secondary education as compared to boys and otherwise may also suffer from discrimination at the hands of parents and teachers in their upbringing.
Stage3	Adolescence	Many adolescent girls become victims of sexual abuse both on internet and otherwise, exploitation and violence, acid attacks, rape ,early marriage, or even HIV/AIDS.
Stage 4	Marriage	Many women are tortured physically, economically and emotionally after their marriage by their husband and inlaws.
Stage 5	Motherhood	Women are sometimes not provided proper medical care, and healthy food during and after her pregnancy .She is often compelled to abort a female fetus.

Stage6	Workplace	often women suffer from exploitation , unequal pay for equal work , lack of promotions despite merit and physical, economic and emotional abuse
---------------	------------------	---

Source: <http://www.womenlawsindia.com/legal-awareness/crimes-against-women/>

Serious Gender Gap: There is a huge gender gap persisting in India .Gender gap is a gap in any area between women and men in terms of their levels of participation, access, rights, remuneration or benefits.(European Commission,1998). Since 2006 World Economic Forum is bringing out Gobal Gender Gap Report, Global Gender Gap index is calculates gender-based disparities on economic, education, health and political criteria. In this index 0 depicts huge gender gap and 1 depicts no gap. Indian gender gap indices from 2006-2018 were compiled by the world bank, shows that gender gap is hovering around 0.60 to 0.64 (World Bank 2018). Further India has slipped to the 112th spot from its 108th position in 2018 in the Global Gender Gap Index 2020, which covered 153 economies of the globe(Sharma 2019).



Source:

https://tcdata360.worldbank.org/indicators/af52ebe9?country=IND&indicator=27959&viz=line_chart&years=2006,2018

The Condition of Women in the Spheres of Higher Learning and Decision Making Spaces:

Though the situation has bettered compared to 1950's in areas like primary and secondary education but in the arena of technical and higher education the presence of women is still to be improved significantly. If we dwell in to the data by adding intersectional data like caste and tribes the situation would be grimmer. The massive privatisation of education since 1990s also has a detrimental effect on the entry of women in to the portals of higher education. Especially the presence of women in to the Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) is critically low. These areas of higher learning are having a higher salience as they have a capacity to turn women in to innovators and entrepreneurs.

In the political realm and the business realm too there is a serious underrepresentation of women can be perceived without much effort. Without the saving grace is the provision of the statutory reservations for the women in the Local Government institutions, their political representations in the higher echelons of power is not showing any improvement for past many decades. The case of women in the entrepreneurial world is not very different from the other sectors. Property laws are which are in favour of gender justice are not properly implemented and hence there a very less chance of women growing as entrepreneurs. Even when they enter in to the challenging world of entrepreneurship and business women sparingly get the space to move forward.

Women as workers are mostly found in the informal sector and are not provided what is really due their wage. The deep informality which has a stranglehold on the work world of majority of women In India bereaves them from dignified incomes and social security.

As the status of women in the realms of Education and the higher decision making realms is falling badly short, it reflects in the less overall presence of women in the cutting edge areas of thought generation, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Thus the structural malady of discrimination bordering on invisible violence is proving as a nemesis for the gender justice in India. Glass Ceiling in various public spaces including private business is quite low.

What has to be done improve the situation?

To enhance the presence of women qualitatively in the higher learning, governance of public affairs and, Private enterprise that means in the critical ideating and decision makes arenas combined and coordinated efforts are needed. Efforts must take at three levels namely at the Societal level, Government level and finally in the economic level also .Work in these three areas is essential because the gender disparity is across all the three sectors. More over each of the sector has intertwined with one another and the change in one sector leads to the change in other sectors also.

Social processes and practices promoting gender justice must be encouraged and incentivised. State agencies and the civil society must play a very proactive role in enhancing gender sensibility and awareness about gender just practices in families and communities. These efforts must include creating awareness about the rights and the statutory provisions in favour of Gender parity and go beyond them.

Social, Legal and education systems must work in tandem to create better working spaces for women. Providing secure and comfortable workspaces which are free from violence and abuse are very important for improving the participation of women in critical areas of work and decision making.

The laws especially laws which provide equal right to property to women, which are came in to existence after a very long delay, starting from the middle of 1980s must be implemented more diligently. Ownership of property is one among the important tool of empowerment and also a path way for promotion of women in to the world of entrepreneurship. Women's decision making ability in the family as well as in other spaces will go up with their control over the resources.

The public sphere must be made gender inclusive and gender sensitive so that the women can have more encouraging and accommodative space. It is proved already that the societies which encourage women's participation in various public spheres break gender stereo types.

Public and Private sectors must create conducive atmosphere for the women to come forward to take responsible positions. This process must go beyond promulgation of statutes. Incentivising the private sector of profit and non-profit Varity for promoting gender equal and gender sensitive practices has to be I place.

The efforts and challenges faced by the Women achievers in the arenas of education, decision making ,and trade finance and management arenas has to be documented .Knowledge achieved through such documentation has to be circulated widely to motivate gender sensitivity and reduce misogyny.

The State Society and the Market (used to depict private entrepreneurial space of the economy) must take cognisance of the gender related disparity and work in tandem to reduce the gender gap in various sectors of the public sphere. More gender equal public sphere will help to develop more diverse and healthy democratic order where freedom and equality go hand in hand.

References

1. CSWI GOI 1975 , Report Of The Committee on The Status of Women, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare ,Department of Social Welfare, New Delhi Government of India.
<http://csirepository.nvli.in/handle/123456789/107> (Accessed on 1st March,2021)
- 2.European Commission, 1998. 100 Words for Equality: A Glossary of Terms on Equality between Women and Men.European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs Unit V/D.5,Luxemberg .
- 3.HLCW GOI 2015 , High Level Committee on the Status of Women (HLC) 2015, Ministry of Women and Child Development ,New Delhi, Government of India .<https://wcd.nic.in/documents/hlc-status-women/>(Accessed on 2 March 2021)
- 4.Kymlicka 2002 :Kymlicka Will(2002) ,Contemporary Political Philosophy and Introduction,New Yorks Oxford University Press
- 5.Majumdar2010 :MajumdarVina (2010), "Emergence of the Women's Question in India and the Role of Women's Studies,"WorkingPapers id:2861,eSocialSciences.,
<https://ideas.repec.org/p/ess/wpaper/id2861.html> (accessed on 1th March 2021)
- 6.MSOPI GOI: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implantation, Government of India
[,http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/reports_and_publication/cso_social_stactices_division/Constitutional&Legal_Rights.pdf](http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/reports_and_publication/cso_social_stactices_division/Constitutional&Legal_Rights.pdf) ,(Accessed on 1st March 2021)
- 7.NCW 2021 : The vision of National Commission for Women available at <http://ncw.nic.in/mission-and-vision/mission>
- 8.Sharma 2019, Sharma Neetu ,India slips four ranks on World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2020, in Mint ,17 December ,2019 .
<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/india-slips-four-ranks-on-world-economic-forum-s-global-gender-gap-index-2020-11576574974188.html>
- 9.World Bank 2018: TCA data page,<https://tcdata360.worldbank.org/indicators/af52ebe9?country=IN>

[D&indicator=27959&viz=line_chart&years=2006,2018](#) (Accessed on 3March 2021)