

## Egalitarianism- A Ladder That Only Goes Down

“Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance.”<sup>1</sup>

Kofi Annan has rightly highlighted the importance of gender equality in his statement, mentioned above. Every society where an individual loses opportunities on the basis of his or her gender, is a prey of gender discrimination. Gender discrimination has existed in our society and has been feeding on roots of progress and growth making it impossible for us to be at par with the gender equal societies. It is mostly the females who face discrimination on the basis of gender. Patriarchy is a worldwide phenomenon and women across the globe have been fighting for decades for their rights and equal opportunities.

The discrimination against females begin even before their birth and is continued throughout their lives. There are several cases of female feticide due to sex determination , and those of them who do make it to this world are mistreated and face discrimination throughout their lives. As a result of

discrimination, the feminine gender is denied of the basic necessities like proper nutritious food, education and health care, this is only the tip of the iceberg that gender discrimination is. The women who fight against the system and are successful in attaining proper education while maintaining a healthy lifestyle have to survive in an environment that strongly perceives men to be better and more capable than their female counterparts. They have to fight the notion that women do not have the caliber and intelligence to take up managerial positions or high profile jobs.

Gender discrimination gives rise to a number of problems, imbalance in sex ratio being the major one. Lack of education among the women which is a result of the gender based discrimination is a very crucial issue and needs to be addressed. Education is an important tool, is the key to the growth of human. And no matter what gender a person is, he/she has right to education. There are many empirical evidences that, increase in female education improves human development outcomes such as child survival, health and schooling whereas lower female education had a negative impact on economic growth

<sup>1</sup> <http://word.world-citizenship.org/wp-archive/1672;www.bustle.com>

as it lowers the average level of human capital. Such kind of imbalance in the education largely affects the economy as education is directly related to economy. A large section of uneducated and unskilled population results in the downfall of the economy since this huge section of population is dependent on others' income for their own survival. Another economic impact of gender discrimination is unequal wages among male and female. The wages of women is much lower than men's despite the same level of position, their chances to get a job is also comparatively lesser.

To quote Qingrong Ma "The only way to solve the problem of women's subordination is to change people's mindset and to plant the new idea of gender equality into every mind." With the change in times there has been an evident change in people's mindsets regarding the position of women in the society. The governments across the world, including the Government of India, has taken several steps to prevent discrimination on the basis of gender and to secure the rights of

women. Hindu Succession Act (1956), Dowry Prohibition Act (1961), The DC and PNDR Act (2002) are some of the initiatives taken by the Government of India to secure the rights of women in our country. The government has also launched various schemes, such as 'Beti Padhao Beti Bachao', 'Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya' and 'Indira Gandhi Mitrivita Sahyog Yojna', in order to lessen the gender based discrimination. Several non-governmental organizations, such as Equality Now and ProMundo, have also been working to fight the evil of gender discrimination.

It will be safe to say that we are living in a world where a great section of the population has accepted women to be at par with the men. This acceptance is a result of the struggle which went on for decades and yet there exists a section of people who are still walking on the path of gender discrimination. For a better tomorrow we will have to put efforts in attaining a society free of gender bias.

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