

Evolving Gender Roles in 21st Century: The Path to Equality

Newcy Baglari¹, Dr. Alangbar Swargiary²

¹Post Graduated Political Science, Asstt. Professor, St. Xavier's College, Tezpur

²Asstt. Professor, Department of Visual Arts, Gossaigaon B.Ed. College

Abstract—Gender roles are socially constructed expectations that define appropriate patterns of behaviour for boys and girls, men and women, based on the concepts of masculinity and femininity associated with their biological sex. These roles are one of the primary factors contributing to gender inequality. Gender roles have a significant impact on both individual lives and society as a whole. The gender-based division of labour, which stems from traditional gender roles, has historically confined women to the private sphere while assigning men to the public sphere. Although this pattern has evolved over time and considerable progress has been made toward gender equality, traditional stereotypes of masculinity and femininity continue to persist. Gender roles are not static; rather, they are dynamic and change over time in response to cultural, social, and economic transformations. The twenty-first century is widely recognized as an era of rapid social change, and this has brought noticeable shifts in the organization and perception of gender roles. In this paper, the researcher attempts to examine how the rigid patterns of traditional gender roles are becoming more flexible in the twenty-first century, paving the way toward greater gender equality.

Index Terms—Gender role, women, society, stereotypes and empowerment.

I. INTRODUCTION

Gender is a social definition of male and female placing on it the expected norms and behavior to be followed as constructed by the society. Gender is in fact a hierarchical notion that creates inequalities on economic and social grounds. The gendered definition by the society upholds the roles assigned to man and women separately termed as gender role. Gender role is also termed as sex role. It is a stereotype based on gender defining the attitudes, attributes and actions of

man and women. Women are traditionally viewed as givers, nurturers, housewives, and helpers. Men and women are given different social roles in society based on gender roles, which has an effect on people's employment choices, the sort of role they play as co-workers, spouses, or parents, as well as many other facets of their lives. They have an effect on labor force patterns and work-family connections on a large scale. Gradually with the industrialization and resistance towards colonialism women happened to join public sector and came the dawn of change in gender roles. The gender roles are not static it's dynamic in nature and differ from society to society. Sexual orientation, identification, and practices are socially constructed and the practices differ based on cultural aspects of the society so, there is no generalized distinction based on gender roles. Gender roles are changing influenced by education too and women got engaged into economic sources institutions are in companies, factories or schools.

Objective of the Study

- 1) To understand Gender roles.
- 2) To study gender roles leading to inequalities.
- 3) To analyze the path to equality by education.

Methodology: The research paper is based on secondary source. In secondary source books, research papers published in journal, articles, newspapers and other depositories like shodhganga.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Dr. Mrs Uzmauddin in his book "Women's Rights and Social Change", has highlighted about how women position was in the early Vedic period in India. It has also mentioned about different kind of rights given by different countries supported by law.

Mr. Mohit Upadhyay in his book "Rural Women" deals with the status of women in India how it has changed from equal status with men in ancient times to low points in the medieval period to demand for equal rights by reformers in modern India.

III. GENDER ROLES

Sex is a person's genitalia at birth which is a biological concept of male and female where gender is not a biological notion but a societal notion of man and women. Gender roles are behaviors, attitudes and actions that society feels as appropriate or inappropriate for a man or woman, boy or girl, according to cultural norms and traditions. Social expectations about our behavior, speech, attire, grooming and overall demeanor based on our ascribed sex are known as gender roles. Girls and women are expected for instance to dress in stereotypical feminine ways and to exhibit kindness, hospitality and care whereas men are supposed to be powerful, combative and brave. The defining gender differentiation in society assigning gender roles has not influenced only at domestic level but also on employment ground where the jobs like nurses, hairdresser, babysitter and teacher are deemed to be perfect for women and the jobs like police officer, truck driver, electrician, and firefighter are deemed to be for men. Gender roles can't be defined from one aspect of life of social or economic aspects only it is interlinked to social, economic, political and cultural and many other aspects of life that we come across. Gender roles are social norms emerging out of interactions and sanctioned by social networks. The power disparities and restrictions on our capacity for genuine self-expression, gender roles can have a profound effect on our relationships. The gender stereotypes leading to gender roles result in specific outcomes of gender inequalities. The gender roles and gender stereotypes are regarded to be the drivers that hold gender inequalities in society. Right from individual interactions and identities to institutional processes, gender is ingrained in social connections at every level. However, gender role differs with the changes of time as new trends of social expectations develop. The prescriptive nature of socially given gender roles has been contested, when feminists in particular began to draw a difference between sex and gender.

IV. GENDER ROLES FACETS OF INEQUALITIES

Gender Inequalities means the discrimination on the basis of sex or gender where one gender is given more privileged over the other. It is the task of socialization that the elders in the family or society carry out is the main pillar behind the extant of gendered society leading to gender inequalities. Gender roles leading to gendered work has divided the work in society. Gender roles and norms specify how individuals of a specific age and gender are supposed to act in a specific social setting. The customs and belief along with the patriarchal setup in society holds the gender inequalities.

In social context, inequalities can be highlighted well in the families where both the partners are job holders and where it's made sure that men enjoy the leisure time at home by which they are able to focus more on their carrier while women are burdened with the so called "double work duty" where they have to do all the household work after hectic day at the office. In economic context, the gender pay gap which makes women inferior to men stands as a fruit of gendered work where the work assigned to man stands to be public activities where women are seen inefficient. In political context, men occupy the larger share of positions and power in politics due to sexism. The socially grounded construct that public sphere is for men and women are to be in private sphere discriminates women from equal participation of women as men in politics. In cultural context, male child is socialized about their responsibilities for future to be financially successful and have brave personality whereas female is taught about the household work and nurturing their younger ones with soft personality like gentleness, kind and tenderness. The restrictive gender roles in society often create an issue for those who step out from the expected gender roles. Regardless of gender, everyone has the right to grow up and realize their goals. Millions of girls and boys are tragically deprived of their childhoods and put their futures at danger due to unfair gender stereotypes. These harmful expectations frequently have a direct role in the human rights violations of children.

V. ERA OF CONVERSION 21st CENTURY

The 21 century is also known as century for women's equality as in the early centuries women's equality was never a point. It was a traditional idea that matured into predetermined gender roles that a youngster will carry with them into maturity and marriage. The result of these gender roles is the traditional view of marriage, which holds that young men should work full time jobs to support their families, while young women should stay home and raise children. In spite of equal rights that existed theoretically on laws gender has remained a critical and important focus of society because it is a fundamental organizing principle of social construction that governs the processes of production, reproduction and consumption. However, in the 21st century generation that exists now, gender stereotypes are often misinterpreted as supporting women who have become increasingly involved in a variety of fields and occupations.

Globally, women's empowerment and gender equality have been at the top of the agenda. The United Nations has included achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls as one of its Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-5). In addition to being goals for themselves, gender equality and women's empowerment are a means to a wealthy, peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable society. "Unless you participate you cannot win", women, centuries before used to be confined to the private sphere, they were not active participants in the field of political, economy, social and religion. Though they were engaged to it, it was very rare and at low levels. But in the 21st century with the opening up of public sphere to women too as a result of feminist movements, women started to actively participate in the field of politics, economic, society and religion hence the concept of gender role that such public spheres belong to men has changed. The present 21st century shows equal participation of women rather than the previous ages where women were burden with domestic chores at private sphere and were not allowed in the public sphere.

VI. EDUCATION THE ROAD TO EQUALITY

Education don't promote and perpetuate discriminatory gender stereotypes, which are why it is the cornerstone of human growth and has such

enormous potential for change. Education can promote equality by inclusive education policies and practices and by engaging communities and families in promoting gender equality Education also acts as a tool of breaking gender stereotypes, means of empowering women and also a tool of addressing gender-based violence. With an education, females can take an active role in decision-making processes since they will have the information, abilities, and confidence to do so. It helps them express their thoughts, stand up for what they believe in, and have meaningful conversations. In their families, communities, and larger society, education enables females to take up leadership roles and act as change agents. Girls who have an education are in a better position to address social issues and influence laws that advance gender equality by offering their opinions, skills, and knowledge.

VII. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Gender roles are changing which is why many women are now engaged into that sectors which were previously confined for men. In the field of politics, we can see women being politicians like Aung Sang Sui Kyi of Myanmar, Angela Merkel of Germany, Dame Jacinda Kate Laurell Arden of Newzealand, Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh and Draupadi Murmu of India. In the field of economics, we can see women entrepreneurs contributing to the economic growth like Kiran Mazumadar-Shaw the founder of 'Biocon Limited', Falguni Nayar founder of 'Nykaa' Sara Treleaven Blakely founder of 'Spanx', Arianna Huffington the cofounder of 'The Huffington Post' and the founder and CEO of 'Thrive Global' Oprah Winfrey the founder of both 'Harpo Productions' and 'Oprah Winfrey Network' (OWN).

In the field of Defense Captain Shaliza Dhami became the first woman officer in Air force to the post of flight commander of flying unit, Christine Fox of US who became first woman to serve as the acting deputy secretary of defence Lieutenant General Dame Sharon Patricia Moffat Nesmith DCB, She has been Deputy Chief of the General Staff since August 2022 and the first woman to command a British Army brigade in 2014 also the first woman to command a British division-level formation in 2021, and the first woman to be promoted to lieutenant general in the British Army in 2022.

In the field of space and technology Kalpana Chawla first woman of Indian origin to fly to space, Kathryn Sullivan the first American women to walk in space, Peggy Annette Whitson retired NASA astronaut, former NASA chief astronaut and active Axiom Space astronaut notably the oldest women to orbit the earth. Women have now engaged into various sectors breaking the glass ceilings, stereotypes accepting every new opportunity. All the changes in women's life have come through the introduction of education to them where women being aware of their rights and privileges and importantly knowing that they have same capacity as men in various aspects of life.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Education being the key factor of social change must be gender inclusive based on student's enrolment as well as teachers' allotment.
- Women empowerment in every field breaking the stratification and stereotypes.
- Encourage the fair division of household chores so that women are not left behind because being burden with excessive household chores.
- Equal payment and equal benefit for both genders with similar responsibilities.
- Expanding women's security and rights as well as encouraging political engagement.

IX. CONCLUSION

Gender role was more rigid in the earlier times but now with the access of education to both the genders the societal change led the rigid gender roles to flexible. Women have been engaged in many fields like politics, defense, space and technology, economy which were earlier set for men according to societal norms. There are some initiatives taken at the global level like Sustainable Development Goal 5 for gender equality and women empowerment, UNFP being a voice for women and girls, supporting activities that enhance their health and provide them more options in life, as well as advocating for legislative and policy changes and gender-responsive data collecting. Nationally in India we have 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao', 'Mahila Police Volunteers Program', 'Mahila E-Haas'. However, there are still some beliefs and customs that perpetuate gender inequalities in society like women

and girls continue to confront major obstacles to education in many regions of the world. Women are frequently denied the same chances in education, politics, economy and growth due to cultural beliefs and behaviors that uphold the notion that women are less important than men and also vulnerable than men in many aspects.

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