

Gender Stereotypes in Rural Indian Households

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Abstract

Due to pervasive discrimination and gender prejudices, women face insurmountable and complicated obstacles all over the world. New types of prejudice are emerging. Women everywhere confront social and cultural obstacles, but in rural places, these problems tend to be more pervasive and intricate. Rural women continue to be oppressed due to a lack of equality and fairness, and this is more a result of their disadvantage in access than in ability. Gender indicators in the fifth iteration of the National Family Health Survey highlighted the disparate health outcomes between rural and urban women. Roles and expectations based on gender stereotypes are deeply woven throughout rural society. Given the importance of gender parity in achieving climate or development targets, eliminating biases will be a must. While there is no simple solution, addressing the following systemic biases may help. This article explores gender stereotypes as they manifest in rural India.

Key Words: Discrimination, gender biases, sociocultural challenges

Introduction

Contradictions abound in India. Women, seen as goddesses without whose permission labor cannot begin, are revered on the one hand. However, crimes committed against women and girls in India are on the rise. It's tragic because the victims often knew the people who committed the crimes against them. Those responsible might be anybody, including family, acquaintances, or neighbors. This growing distrust has the potential to disrupt the established social order in India. Patriarchal traditions in Indian culture are well ingrained, making it difficult to break free. Most Indian families, including the moms, do not welcome newborn daughters. They express regret over the lost opportunity to benefit from having a boy in the family. Bringing up a girl is a waste of money since she will eventually get married and work for her husband's family for the rest of her life. In India, a woman's life drastically alters after she ties the knot. After being married, she moved in with her new husband's family instead of staying with her own. From an early age on, she has been conditioned to believe that she must adopt the new family's dietary and clothing norms as well as its traditions and customs. So, whether willingly or unwillingly, she adapts her identity to meet the expectations of the groom's family and herself. The dowry she receives is quite expensive. Even after marriage, the bridegroom's family might persist in making demands. The bride is tormented if her family does not comply with the groom's expectations. In many Indian households, violence is a common occurrence. Every once in a while, a dowry-related fatality would occur. It has been noted that it is always the bride who dies in the kitchen, never the ladies who are part of the

groom's family. Stove explosions are a leading cause of death for young brides, which is often covered up as an accident by the groom's family. Due to an increase in dowry-related fatalities among Indian women, the government enacted Section 498A, which places legal responsibility for the untimely death of the bride within seven years of marriage on the shoulders of the groom and his family. In addition, it incorporates post-marriage safeguards to ensure the safety of Indian women. This legislation, like other laws, has been abused by a small minority to exact vengeance on the groom. Unfortunately, several of the grooms were wrongfully detained. The law's effectiveness, however, cannot be measured by its abuse. If that's the criterion, then none of the laws will ever be enforced. The law will still protect the true victims of society, even if some people choose to break it. Women of the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, and Jain faiths, who together make up the majority in India, have been granted equal inheritance rights by the government. Few women now make such a claim, however, out of concern that their brothers would reject them if they do. They are sometimes coerced by their brothers into giving up their claim to the family estate. There is not enough of a safety net for women to successfully litigate in court.

Women in India's rural areas have lower levels of education than males do. The family does not value the education of its female members. Female teachers are scarce, there aren't enough girls' restrooms at school, and older sisters often have to take care of younger siblings when both parents need to work to make ends meet, all of which contribute to the high rate at which girls drop out of school. Even though elementary school is provided at no cost to families, many of them choose not to send their children. The Parliament has enacted the Right to Education, but it will be a long time before it is really implemented. The school lunch program has been revamped to better entice younger students. But the plan ran into trouble when numerous students collapsed after eating meals prepared in the school cafeteria.

Most women in rural India have little say in who they marry. In endogamous societies, where caste is very significant, the elders of both families make the decision and arrange the marriage. The village elders are against the couple being married if the groom is not from the same caste or clan as the bride.

Khap Panchayats, or traditional village elders, penalize adult females and boys of the same village and caste who fall in love and marry in states like Haryana. The elders of the Khap believe that a marriage between two members of the same village or caste is the same as a marriage between two siblings. They punish people by acting as kangaroo courts and handing down death sentences. Parents often do not protest their children's involvement in such cruel acts. The elected Members from these seats do not oppose the Khap Panchayats for fear of alienating their constituents.

Women's Multiples Rules: Most rural women experience both economic hardship and what is known as "knowledge poverty." Women in India's rural areas play an essential and productive role in the country's overall economy. The contribution of rural women to progress is often underestimated for statistical reasons. Despite the fact that women put in more hours at work and generate more revenue for their families than men do, they are still not respected in the workplace. according to (Pankajam & Lalitha, 2005) They are

quiet employees who toil from sunrise till night to help her with the home. However, she still faces criticism from loved ones for being insincere in her work. She is not valued for what she really does to the home, but rather for the free labor she performs on the little agricultural land of rural households. She does this every day, sometimes at the expense of the family's best interests, and yet she is seldom shown the respect she deserves. One of the tenets of the global campaign for gender equality is that men and women should be paid the same for doing equivalent work.

According to the Labour Bureau, there has been minimal progress toward wage equality between men and women in India. Worryingly, this pay gap has worsened in certain areas, even though it has been in rural America for as long as anybody can remember. For plowing labour, males were paid 70 percent more than women at the end of 2004–2005, 80 percent more at the end of March 2012, and 93 percent more at the beginning of 2013–2014. In March of 2005, males were paid 75% more than women for well-digging employment; by the end of the current fiscal year, that gap had widened to 80%. According to the statistics, daily salary gaps have been mostly stable since 1999, but they increased over the first decade of this century.

In 2013, the gender pay gap was greatest for strenuous manual labor (such as ploughing and well-digging) and smallest for more sedentary tasks (such as sowing and harvesting). If one looks at low-skilled labor outside of agriculture, it seems that gender prejudices prevailed once again. According to research (Jayaram, 2003), Very few rural Indian women possess any land or other productive assets. This becomes a major barrier when attempting to get institutional financing. Women make up the vast majority of farm workers. They were mostly given menial tasks to do. Machine maintenance is often performed by men. As of 2003 (Kurukshetra)

Women make up the vast majority of the labor force in rural India, where agriculture is the backbone of the economy. They are the unseen backbone upon which the rural agricultural economy rests. Women in rural areas sometimes have to start helping out around the home at an early age, caring for younger siblings, preparing meals, cleaning, and tending to the feed needs of the family's livestock. Young children are given away in marriage. The fate of Indian women is one of servitude, anonymity, and facelessness. The 'gender insensitive' culture is at the heart of the problem. (Singh, 2004) UNICEF considers marriage before the age of 18 to be an abuse of children's rights. Child brides are more likely to experience abuse and loneliness, miss out on an education, and face health concerns associated with having a baby at a young age. About 23 million females in India are affected by this problem. The vast bulk of them come straight from the country. The United Nations Children's Fund (2012) A government agency in India called the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) reported an alarming decline in rural women's employment between 2009-10 and 2011-12. In occupations that require workers to be present for "the majority of the year," 9.1 million rural women have lost their employment. This reflects the reality that women are unable to get permanent, high-paying positions and are instead compelled to settle for temporary labor. (Varma, 2013) A ray of hope for rural women in this bleak economic climate comes from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act. Many rural women, according to many surveys,

are leaving the home for the first time to seek paid job since the passage of this Act. Being an official government program, the social and cultural patriarchal stigma associated with working in the public sphere is gradually disappearing. As a result of their newfound economic freedom, rural women are undergoing a profound cultural shift. This is the first time they have real agency over how their money is spent. As their financial situation improves, many of them are also attending self-help organizations to develop their other skills.

Gender Stereotype in Rural Indian Households

(i) We say, "That's a woman's job." The unequal distribution of housework responsibilities has permeated our societal institutions to the point that it is now the norm. In addition, interactional studies of gender disparity in housework have shown that taking care of the home has become an integral part of women's sense of self.

In addition, cultural norms have long served as the basis for categorizing and delegating domestic tasks. In light of this, the push to raise men's commitment to housekeeping has improved only modestly since the 1960s, while universal support for women to seek employment has risen.

This cultural setting is especially prominent in rural areas, where people are less open to alternative gender roles and goals. Changing attitudes and priorities that benefit women are often resisted because of mental rigidity.

This not only prevents gender roles from blurring, but also encourages gendered perspectives on housework amongst the young, who are often seen to be more open-minded and egalitarian on this front. Changing the paradigm, where males have greater rights frequently at the cost of women, is challenging due to the very persistent and ill-defined gender beliefs in rural environments.

The effects of overburdening yourself with work are far-reaching. It has negative effects on women's health and restricts their ability to pursue further education. A 2019 academic research out of Maharashtra, for instance, found that rural women there were severely malnourished and lacking in micronutrients. Half of the women questioned in the research had chronic energy deficits, with anemia affecting almost 75% of the women who were not pregnant nor breastfeeding.

In addition to this, women's heavy home obligations prevent them from pursuing any kind of income generation. Housework has always been a battleground between the sexes. Consistent, thoughtful efforts are required to build an environment that promotes equity in the division of chores and nourishes, educates, and empowers women in order to repair these underlying mental schisms.

(ii) The job that women do is not work. As a result, rural women and their contributions to the national economy are often underappreciated and undervalued. Therefore, India's female labor force participation rate is one of the lowest in the world despite the fact that women shoulder enormous obligations that directly contribute to the country's socioeconomic well-being.

Caregiving is not included as "labor" in national accounting systems since it is hard to assess and has little effect on the development of social and economic policies. However,

ignoring unpaid care labor reduces the efficiency of policies and reinforces the mentality of insignificance that surrounds women's housework.

This means that rural Indian women continue to have a terrible economic condition. While the din of pots and pans may have drowned out the hum of housework, the commitment and diligence of ASHA and Anganwadi staff is plain to see. Despite their vital role, these women are paid less than the legally required minimum wage since they are considered "honorary workers" rather than regular employees. And even in "economically-relevant industries," women's representation is deemed insufficient. For instance, despite the fact that women, on average, spent as much time as men in agricultural activities, statistics on time usage from the National Statistical Office reveal that the definition of "worker" includes women mainly in the harvest season.

This is on top of regular housework. The combination of such gender biases leads to a reduction in women's health and nutrition, which in turn reflects a fall in women's self-esteem and fundamental dignity. Essentially, sexism is sustained by a sexist worldview that views women primarily in terms of their economic value as caregivers and ignores the value of their emotional and physical labor. Discriminatory behaviors have an effect on social structures and a monetary price tag. The value of Indian women and girls' unpaid caregiving labour to the country's economy is estimated at \$19 trillion per year.

Therefore, policies should be rethought to be fair to these economic drivers and take into consideration the billion hours of unpaid effort that rural women put in each year.

(iii) "Financial literacy is inconsequential for women." : Cultural and social conventions seem to have set guidelines for how women should act, what they should be responsible for, and how they should be regarded. The continuing gender disparity in financial literacy and the purposeful marginalization of women in the workplace are both reflections of these norms.

Despite government initiatives that have greatly increased women's access to formal finance, their participation is still comparatively low. Women make up over half of the account holders in the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana Scheme, although they only use their accounts at an 11% lower rate than males.

Efforts to improve overall access that fall short of establishing financial literacy may ultimately be ineffective.

Because of the crucial role financial literacy plays in gauging progress and well-being, closing this gap is essential. Furthermore, in most social organizations, men's supremacy in financial decision-making is the source of their power. The transmission and transformation of such dynamics favoring women and the inclusion of women in choices they should rightfully be a part of might be aided by organizing financial literacy in rural regions.

'Equality' Not in Real Terms

The gender of our children makes no difference to us. Is it really the case, or is it simply a word you tell yourself when you need to calm down? You look great in that outfit; I love your shoes." These are common phrases used to complement women. When praising a male, people tend to say things like, "You're so strong" or "He is so amazing at athletics," which are not typical compliments for girls to hear. Conversations like "Hope you get

married to a successful and affluent guy" and "Your daughter has reached 25, when are you going to have her married?" are common topics of discussion at family gatherings. But you won't hear talk like that among boys.. You hear words like "I hope you have a prosperous business ahead" or "What are you preparing to do when your graduation is complete" spoken to lads. Why do praises concerning a woman's looks or her marriage seem to take center stage in our culture? On the other hand, males are often praised and questioned about their physical prowess, skills, and aspirations. A girl's role in the household is to serve meals to guests and help with Diwali decorations. However, you may anticipate males to pick up loved ones at the airport. Role expectations for girls and boys in today's culture are drastically different from one another.

Gender socialization and gender stereotypes

The term "gender socialization" refers to the early life experiences that shape an individual's understanding of the gendered rules, norms, behaviors, and expectations. A child's character is formed by the ideas and behaviors he or she is exposed to throughout their formative years. Girls are socialized to be quiet and refined, whereas guys are conditioned to be aggressive and dominant. A little kid advised his sibling not to weep like a female. Boys get vehicles, while females play with dolls or pretend kitchens. These are examples of the gender socialization standards that are observed all around the world. The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women defines gender stereotyping as "the practice of attributing to an individual woman or man certain features, characteristics, or duties based solely on their membership in the social group of women or men." When gender bias leads to the suppression of basic liberties and rights, it is unacceptable. Gender roles are learned and reinforced via socialization. It's common for parents and classmates to be critical of boys and girls if they don't behave in ways they've been taught are appropriate for their gender.

Distinctions between the terms "sex" and "gender"

What therefore is the best way to comprehend the significance of the sex and gender gap? The gender identities of women and men are based on the biological characteristics that make them feminine or male. There must be a clear delineation between "sex" and "gender," with the former referring to the biological categories of genes, hormones, and external and internal genitalia, and the latter to the sociocultural categories of learned qualities, cultural expectations, and behavioral patterns. This helps explain why the concepts of masculinity and femininity have varied throughout time and place and cultural contexts. Cultural norms about appropriate male and female behavior demonstrate that gender distinction and identity are shaped by more than just genetics. While cultural perceptions of gender may change, biological gender remains constant.

Common gender stereotypes inherent in Indian culture

Let's take a look at some possible gender stereotypes in Indian society, including what it means to "act like a man" and "act like a woman" in our culture.

As soon as the nurse exclaims, "It's a boy!" the subtly sexist assumptions begin. Both his conscious and subconscious desire to have the family name carried on through him fill him with pride. He receives blue (never pink) firearms and automobiles as gifts. If he cries as a child, he will be advised to "stop acting like a female." Perhaps he learns to

repress his feelings after being taught that showing them will make him seem "girly." He would probably be told he has to put on a tough exterior in order to be accepted. He will likely be encouraged to pursue the "proper masculine activities," such as sports, taking care of the outside job, managing money, learning to ride/drive, repairing the bulb, etc. Perhaps he would lose interest in pursuing a career in food service. When he goes out, he will probably face less constraints. When deciding on a profession, he would be pushed to set lofty goals for himself. Careers like teaching, counseling, etc. are likely to be looked down upon, with the assumption being that they are more suited to women. Since it is often accepted that men should be the major breadwinner in their families, the issue of work-life balance may never arise for him.

However, as the nurse announces "It's a girl!" the equations often shift. Maybe pink is used to adorn her room since it is seen as a feminine color, and dolls are purchased for her. She may be looked down upon in many parts of India because of her gender. Having the goal of "giving her away" or "paying for her dowry/marriage costs" in your mind might be depressing. She will be given the space to feel her feelings and weep as she develops. She will likely be taught "good manners," such as speaking and laughing softly and not loudly, being sensitive, being deferential to elders, not "fighting like boys," etc. She will probably be urged to pursue the "proper hobbies," such as being a good chef, dancer, singer, housekeeper, server, etc. She may be subjected to greater limitations and less encouragement to go out than her brother. It's possible that she'll hear warnings about how difficult it is to 'balance' a profession in the public or military sector with caring for a family and keeping the house in order as she makes her employment decisions. The gender stereotype of women holds that their primary roles at home are those of caretaker and mother.

Further Research on gender stereotypes Necessary : Many studies have revealed that gender preconceptions are fostered more than they are innate. A recent study found that the disparities between "average" females and "average" boys were substantially less than those between individual girls and boys. Nevertheless, we often generalize from the "typical" child to actual children.

The prototypical American guy is a strong, independent thinker who can think on his feet and take charge of any situation. The stereotypical female is one who is sympathetic, sentimental, courteous, sensitive, social, trendy, mild-mannered, soft-spoken, and a follower. These gender norms and stereotypes may be expressed in urban settings via more indirect and covert means.

Studies have shown that stereotyping may have negative effects on a person's health and happiness. Because of these preconceived notions, both sexes are pressured to downplay the qualities that make them special. Instead, there is constantly pressure to fit into stereotypical gender roles.

It's possible that there are a number of guys who are mild-mannered and affable in nature, who take pleasure in the art of cooking, and who are often criticized by mainstream culture for lacking charisma and extroversion. However, there may be certain women who are naturally outgoing, strong, and tough who are constantly attacked by our culture for not conforming to societal expectations of femininity.

It's also all too typical to make the sweeping generalization that "all males are from Mars" and "all women are from Venus." Gender stereotypes are perpetuated by the exaggeration and glorification of differences between men and women that science has shown to be mostly attributable to individual variation. The nature vs. nurture debate of what constitutes a man or a woman is ongoing.

G Soh shatters taboos in his book "Men are from earth and women are from earth," demonstrating that the sexes have more physiological traits in common than they do distinctions. All humans, male and female, have the same basic emotional needs.

Conclusion

Our true selves have a way of being buried under all the commotion. Many of us are aware of this, but we are unsure of how to break free of the confines we have imposed on ourselves. We are aware that we have the freedom to choose what is best for us, regardless of whether or not it conforms to traditional gender norms.

One of the most effective ways we may affect social change is to rid ourselves of preconceived notions about ourselves and others. According to psychologists, achieving mental equilibrium and well-being requires balancing one's masculine and feminine traits.

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