Gender Inequality in Private and Public Spheres and the Role of Welfare State in India

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Abstract: *Gender relations and gender roles lead to different exposures and responses to give out stress, different availability of resources, different expectations, and responsibilities, and it affects women disproportionately in acquiring health issues and empowerment. Throughout history till the present times many components of women's lives have been driven by preconditioned institutionalized form of sexism throughout all social classes in India. Gender inequality is prevalent most of the time in disguise of social rituals and culture. Sometimes people need special training to understand the inequality they are victims of and most of the time the differences are practiced openly. The objective of the study is to investigate the scope of women empowerment in the mentioned areas. Because it is found that women's life has more social interventions than medical interventions during need, the significance of this paper is to analyze the present scenario of women's overall health in Indian society with their scope of opportunity to be empowered. The research is based on secondary data. The methodology followed in the chapter is qualitative analysis with theoretical explanation.*

Keywords: Gender, Inequality, health, empowerment, society, welfare state.

"The future of gender differences is intimately tied to the future of gender inequality"
– Michael S. Kimmel (Kimmel, 2011)

1. Introduction

Society has been putting intervention on every sphere of women's lives, but when it comes to health, women's body has been neglected in the past. Not only in medical science research, our home and private sphere has neglected the women's body and health and has kept glorifying their role as a care giver and as a secondary member of the household. The social conditioning for the women has been done in such a way that they were unable to recognize the inequality caused to them, and they believed their role in the society is to provide care for the family. Later, after the industrial revolution when gradually women started to enter the workforce, gradually this picture slowly changed. Women started to acquire education, and they entered the specialized professional courses like medicine, law, education etc. But in every professional and academic areas the gender inequality was prominent, because all the dominant positions in the workforce was occupied by men. Gender discrimination is common in all societies, and it takes different form. Inequality in terms of gender can be experienced in public as well as in private life. Sometimes gender discrimination in one sphere determines the discrimination in other domains. To understand gender oppression, it is important to analyze public and private spheres and its relation to gender.

Private sphere and public sphere are two spheres where people interact every day. The public sphere is open for all and encourages the exchange of ideas. Private space on the other hand is enclosed and not open to all, for example, the family. The existence of two spheres can be traced back to the ancient Greece where public sphere was political domain where the major rules were decided upon. The sociologists defined and redefined the notion over time. German sociologist Jürgen Habermas in his book, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, differentiates the domain (Habermas, 1989). Public sphere is the quality of democracy and based on it. Public domain is for exchange of idea, belief and from which grows 'public authority' to frame the social value and belief system. Private domain is, he wrote, "made up of private people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state. " To him, the public sphere depends on the private sphere. Private domain on the other side considered as space for family and theoretically supposed to be free from other social institutions and greater society. However, the difference between public and private spheres is overlapping in our daily life. The position of women in public and private sphere is very different. They experienced systematic exclusion from the public domain and are confined in private sphere but their position in private sphere is shaped by their status in public domain. (Crossman, 2020)

Private domain is the reflection of greater society and to understand the nature of inequality. Gender oppression in private and public domain is the expression of the structure of society-patriarchy. Though the term is well known but often misinterpreted. Patriarchy as usually understood as difference between male and female, but it is an ideology based on 'control and dominance'.

To understand the public sphere, we are living in a society where men and women experience different welfare state. In

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many countries the legislation highlights the difference, which points out several disadvantages of women, especially regarding employment. Other such discriminations can be based on ethnicity, race, sexual preference and disability. Women's welfare state has historically remained constrained compared to that of men's welfare state. This is because women's social position is seen as dependent on the male authority as the head of the family or the breadwinner. Even now, as the employment rates among married women are high, the effects of patriarchy are still very dominant. Even if now women are staying without a male partner, the age-old traditional pattern of a patriarchal husband has continued effect on women's involvement at home, economic space, as an employee and as a citizen of a state.

The root of domination in public and private domain lies in the societal structure that is male-dominated and male-identified. All significant societies were patriarchal from beginning as mentioned by Therborn (Therborn, 2004). Sylvia Walby defined the system as system that practice male dominance, oppression, and exploitation. The definition rejects biological determination and the idea that every individual woman is in subordinate position and man is in dominant position. Sylvia Walby mentioned the six structures of patriarchy to identify the area of oppression in patriarchal society (Walby, 1990). The impact of the structure would vary with other variables like race, class, caste etc. The structures of patriarchy as mentioned by Walby in the mode of production, patriarchal construct in paid work, patriarchal relation to the state, male violence, relation in sexuality and in terms of cultural institutions. The structure of patriarchy is maintained through the mentioned structure and responsible for gender oppression. These structures of patriarchy will be analyzed in terms of gender inequality in India.

First, Paid work in patriarchal structure: This area is widely used to maintain inequality in terms of gender. The structure defined the concept of 'work' in capitalist society and only recognized the value of paid work. The system excludes women from paid work and confined them in household activities. The patriarchal system excludes women to acquire high paid job and equal opportunities of employment to secure the dominant position of men. In present modern societies also, women face discrimination in labour market directly or indirectly. Pay gap and Gender gap in labour market often reveal the fact.

In the World Economic Forum's, Gender Gap Index in 2020, India ranked 112th position and in 2017 and 2018 India secured 108th position. Gender Wage Gap is serious concern for India, though The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 of India prohibits discrimination in payment for the same work. Besides, India is also suffering from pay disparity in organized and unorganized sector. The new Code on Wages, 2019 consolidates four labour laws of India on wages-Payment of Wages Act 1936, Minimum Wages Act 1948, Payment of Bonus Act 1965 and Equal Remuneration Act 1975. The main difference between Equal Remuneration Act and Code on Wages is the former focused on inequality against women and discrimination between men and women, the later emphasized on prohibition of

discrimination on the grounds of gender and also covering the LGBTQ communities. (Walby, 1990)

Gender Pay Gap is an indicator of the improper structure of society and social injustice, which needs attention. Although India has identified the issue of pay equity but there is lot more to do also. The notion of equal pay for 'same work' needs to be advocated and promoted by the government. Through effective wage policies and strict implementation of existing anti-discriminatory wage policies the issues can be addressed. Enlightenment of female workers about their rights is also important in this context.

Second, Household Production in patriarchal structure: In the patriarchal mode of production, the work of the housewives in private sphere are undervalued. Though women of the system playing vital role in production of labour their work remain invisible in the economic system. Besides, they are burdened with all the responsibilities of the private sphere. Unpaid work is more discriminatory and exploitative against women than paid work. Women are always considered solely responsible for household activities – cleaning, cooking etc. The structure on the other hand allows men to take benefit from the unpaid work without recognizing the value of it. (Walby, 1990)

The discrimination in this private sphere is influencing the status of women in public forum as well. They spent their time more cooking and cleaning for the family which in turn limits the time that can be spend in public sphere. The disproportionate share of household responsibilities prevents women to enter in full-time jobs, advancing their career etc. Employers also discriminate against recruiting women at childbearing age to avoid the cost of hiring. The legal institutions and policies also treat women differently based on the social expectation in the context of childrearing. Housework and childcare obligation in the private sphere restrict women's participation in public sphere. Women are often observed to sacrifice their career and to enroll in low paid, unskilled part-time work for the burden of unpaid work. Many other variables are influencing within household responsibilities for their difference in paid work. Highly educated families without children share a more egalitarian approach in sharing household work but the picture is not same for low-educated low-income family. (OCED.Stat, 2017)

The problem of humiliation and subjugation in the domestic sphere is not new but the situation can change with little initiative. The society should encourage men to take the household responsibilities. The Policies should be used to incentivize the father's care. Well-paid paternity leave can change the situation to some extent. Stereotypical norms on care giving and housework are also challenging. Government should use different tools to reduce bias against unpaid work.

Third, Culture in patriarchal system: The culture is the way of thinking, feeling and acting. Culture is always determined by the structure of society. Discrimination in the public sphere is due to the culture of patriarchal system which also influences the private sphere. Customs, rituals, beliefs, and other institutions of society play a significant role in the

formation of culture and thus in gender oppression. Individuals learn to confirm to the male-identified and male-dominated norms in patriarchal system through gender socialization. Individuals learn the discriminatory norms of culture through the socialization process. Patriarchy demands confirmation to discriminatory norms of culture. (Walby, 1990)

Culture is not only related to beliefs, customs and rituals or tradition of other society, but it is part of our every life and understanding. Culture often shapes the expectation and behaviour appropriate for women or men. The notion of gender itself is created by culture. Culture only ascribed the activities as women's work and men's work with social justification. Thus, pattern and expectation from women varies from society to society. But culture is not static with time, culture will also evolve and need neutral structure to establish equality. Strategies for women's empowerment can contribute to women's ability to advocate and establish their own perception of society-by changing the discriminatory customs, beliefs, norms of society. UNDPs 'Human Development Report' in 1995 highlights the importance of women empowerment to cultural and social change. Empowerment is taking control of one's own life. Real empowerment is only possible when they speak for themselves. The egalitarian culture would help to empower all. Though the gender relation in patriarchal society favors men and allows them to access social resources disproportionately but they are playing important role in bringing change in society. Recent changes include the formation of male's networks for gender equality and the white ribbon campaign against domestic violence also initiated by men.

Fourth, Patriarchal relation to Sexuality: Patriarchal structure decides the norms of sexuality. The structure only decides the sexual orientation of individual and considers heterosexuality should be the norm. Besides, in the patriarchal structure sexual desire of women are always negatively evaluated whereas the sexual desire of men is accepted positively. Sexuality of homosexuals is not only ignored in the patriarchal structure but also considered as deviation. (Walby, 1990)

Patriarchy shapes sexual orientation and desire and doesn't allow deviation from the social norms. LGBTQ communities for example are still facing discrimination in different spheres. They usually face pervasive discrimination, though society has laws to protect them.

Fifth, Male Violence in patriarchal structure: Violence is another area of patriarchal domination and discrimination. Male violence in the system is tolerated by the refusal to intervene. The type of violence the reporting system and the attitude against the victim are the expression of patriarchal structure. The rising rate of rape, sexual abuse, domestic violence is the reflection of patriarchal aggression and control. (Care International Annual Report, 2019-20)

Violence against women in India hinders the women's educational attainment and employment. Against women has a social and economic implication in society. Recent lockdown due to COVID19 revealed the picture of gender discrimination with sharp increase in the incidence of domestic violence. Violence against women is rooted in unequal power and gender discrimination (Care International Annual Report 2018). Violence against women is considered as violence of human rights which have far reach consequences for victim and her family. National plan of Actions and Sustainable Development Goals which tried to eliminate violence against women but did not manage to have sufficient fund. The slowdown of global economy is another cause for reducing fund allocated for Violence against women related issues(Sylvia Walby, January 2018). UN Women, 2020 also address the increasing rate of domestic violence and its consequences in future.

In India, as per National Crime Record Bureau report in 2020 showed sharp increase in rape case registration in the year 2019. Women's higher rate of participation in unpaid labour in private sphere and low participation in labour is a reason behind violence against women. (K. Das., November 2000)

Sixth, The State in patriarchal structure: According to Welby, the state works for patriarchal structure. The rules, regulation, law, and welfare activities are mainly framed and imposed by the males of the society and thus not neutral.

Our understanding of the welfare state has been revolutionized by the Feminist Movements about this dichotomy between the private and public sphere, because the oppression of the women is specifically prominent in this private-public division. Women have long been associated only with the private sphere or home, whereas the men dominate both the spheres. Therefore, women are considered to be a second-class citizen in both the domains. The liberal state has always been hegemonic in character, where the status of women was considered similar to the working-class groups, leaving very little scope for the radical reforms of the social and political structure. (Walby, 1990)

Over the last two centuries, we have come across tedious attempts to bring about radical political, social and economic changes for attaining women's equity through the women's liberation movement. But one of the most obvious consequences of an individualistic approach of gender is that men and women are perceived as victims or villains, exploiting or defending against one another. This kind of individualistic view sees women and men as two different groups within the same category, instead of paying attention to differences among both with respect to social class, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity and so on. During the World Wars or during any epidemic, the woman's space was portrayed as an extension of domestic responsibilities, crippling down their potential outside their homes. Even in female occupations hegemonic masculinities were evident, where the administrative positions were always occupied by the men. This kind of sex segregation enabled men to consider they to be in a privileged position compared to women.

So, we can understand that in a welfare state, gender roles operate in three primary areas. Firstly, it is exercised at the individual level, starting from the socialization process at home. Secondly, gender inequalities are necessarily

produced and retained through social interaction and relations in a particular social context. Thirdly, gender divide is produced with the structure of organizational and institutional arrangements, where the social practices, policies and structures help to sustain it.

This chapter aims to find the inequalities against women practiced both publicly and privately, and it looks into the transformation of our socio-political aspects, so that we can determine the scope of their empowerment in the patriarchal environment like that of India, after a great crisis like an epidemic or a pandemic.

Rationale of the Study

This paper investigates the transformation and the condition of women after some big changes happens globally or locally, like the pandemic and the epidemics. This inquiry is very essential to understand the aspects of Women's health in politics, media, education and workplaces when the world faces a huge challenge and the levels of inequality and discrimination that prevails while the situation gradually returns to normal. The status and dignity of women throughout these social changes indicates how far we are advancing as nation states and how inclusive and equal our society and institutions have managed to become.

Many sociologists made attempts to understand how social change is inevitable after any epidemic in a strongly established social structure. They found out two interesting possibilities for reducing gender discrimination. Firstly, every social institution is susceptible to ongoing social changes. Secondly, any conflict or tension will have far reaching effects to alter these traditional institutional establishments.

Some recent debates by sociologists focus on how these traditional gender roles have gradually declined. In the twenty-first century people have started to embrace social change. Even within the realms of rationalized business, people are now considering learning 'emotional intelligence' to manage their employees in a compassionate way. But again, due to the impact of technology and globalization, there are emotional gaps along with new conflicts, traumas, and challenges in the welfare states.

The idea of equality is practiced in the Constitution of India. Various provisions in Indian Constitution specified gender equality. The preamble emphasized the value of liberty, equality, justice, and dignity for all. Article 14 [1], Article 15 [2] and Article 13 vest on equality. Though the constitution encourages equality, but exceptions are there too. Gender discrimination is often identified in personal laws, i. e., law related to marriage, divorce, guardianship, adoption, maintenance, inheritance, wills, succession and so on. Gender inequality is identified in the law related to age of consent for marriage, Adultery charge in divorce, practice of polygamy in Muslim Law, law related to custody and guardianship. (Jain, 2018)

Gender inequality is common in all the structures of patriarchy and challenging the growth of society. The structure of patriarchy acts differently for different people in relation to their class, caste, ethnicity, and race. All the institutions and structures directly or indirectly support the male domination. The structure of the society places women and men differently in public and private sphere. The public sphere is often identified by males whereas the private is associated with females and children. These differences are identified as myths to mask the gender difference and women's subordination. Patriarchal structure explains the form of inequality in the system. Gender specified labour division explains women's status at home. Socially identified sex specified the role of women in family. In India women are expected to confirm the age specified role which is the cause of work-family conflict among women and their systematic withdrawal from public sphere. Focusing on work-family conflict and conflict between the partners in their relationship with household activities generate frustration and distress. (Mina Westman, July 2006)

Hence, we need to study and find out the mechanisms through which we can address the detected inequalities and take proper initiatives to make a positive impact towards making the society gender neutral through empowerment and awareness generation among the entire population.

2. Materials and Method

The paper aims to speculate the inequalities and stratification based on Gender in private and public domain. The objective of this chapter is to clarify the condition of women in patriarchal social structures over a period. The explanations are justified by some major sociological theories. Thus, the work is mainly qualitative and based on secondary resources. Books, articles, journals, book chapters and newspaper articles are the main sources of information. Review of literature is done for analyzing and summarizing the issues with few suggestive measures.

3. Results and Discussion

When we speak about resisting gender in everyday life in any welfare state, we cannot forget about the First-Wave Feminism of the nineteen centuries: demanding women's voting rights and entry of women in education and employment. Prior to that there was no existence of the word 'feminism'. Rather, it was called 'the woman question'. Here the question was how to challenge a woman's place at home and asking about their position in the then modern society.

During the Victorian era and the second half of nineteen century, professions such as medicine and law began to open for women. After that the 'New woman' started to emerge. Dress freedom movements and Bodily freedom movements started to challenge many such restrictions. Yet there was a lack of political freedom. In education also, women were not evenly distributed, and the female members were underrepresented in courses related to science, engineering, and technology. They were mainly concentrated in the tertiary sectors of education, equivalent to lower levels of qualification, which is again female centric. Unemployment rates of women shows that they were holding inferior positions in the workforce. Though relatively uniform rates of wages apply to all in the corporate sector and union government sectors, the basic outcome for the women were

seen as a product of power relations of class than gender power. In this context women are vulnerable to poverty because again they were not working full time, full year. The disadvantage of part-time work leads to low wages and underemployment.

The Second-Wave Feminism primarily centered on women's right to choose motherhood. But all these women's resistance would be successful or not depended upon how men responded to it. Any change in gender relations depended largely upon the enterprise of masculinity.

When we talk about the future of women's place in the state, the history comes to the forefront repeatedly, because the socially created views as men are 'naturally' aggressive and women are 'naturally' nurturing, is the main source of dispute that emphasized the future gender roles.

So, looking back to the women's rights during 1990s welfare state, it can be divided into three aspects i. e., women's economic position, their traditional role as a caregiver and to focus on the policies which tried to redress this kind of social inequality.

Throughout history we have seen that from administration to policymaking, as well as in law enforcements of the state were always in the male hands. Over the past recent decades, the situation has changed gradually in different countries at a different pace. So there has been a certain level of social inequality as women were underrepresented in every profession they took up. Hence, they remained as the 'protected' population and the men remained as their 'protectors'. The equality policies were also discriminative, especially in the areas of employment. Though the legislative approach to anti-discrimination is similar for everyone, issues related to women depended mainly on the establishments of the state. Class politics however has played a significant role in changing the politics related to gender. But we must accept that without women's movements, they would have achieved very little throughout the world. The welfare state has to be more sensitive and liberal for the overall population in order to sustain the significance of the welfare state. (Shore, 2019). The transformation of women's place in our society can be understood by looking at a few theories by some eminent scholars over the time.

Ethnomethodology: Gender is an ongoing accomplishment emerging during interaction, both between and within sex (Gerson, 1985). People are recreating their own as well as others' sense of gender while interacting, which is termed as "doing gender" by West and Zimmerman (1987). Gender just isn't class and race, and its accomplishments cannot be understood outside the context in which they are observed. (Wharton, 2005)

Symbolic Interaction Theory: Feminist sociologists, sociologists and social psychologists focuses on the key component through which "mind, self and society" are generated. Language or symbolic interaction theorizes gender inequality can be sustained through decades, because men usually dominant conversations, whereas women mostly use bodily and verbal language, building gender bias

towards them. Ferguson (1980) argued that men define both general and specific situations, with reference to which women assumes their self-identity. (Wharton, 2005)

Gender Theory in Sociology: Chodorow observed that toddler and infant caretaking is overwhelmingly done by women, so for both young children, "their primary love object" is a female. This result in girls growing up into women whose primary concern in life is in connection to nurturance, while men focus on social achievement. Male misogyny and dominance are also the result of the fact that women mother male children. (Wharton, 2005)

World Systems Theory: This theory focuses on the relationship between rich, poor and core nations, peripheral and semi peripheral ones, but it ignores the vital role played by women in the economic spheres of the Third World Countries (Ward 1990-93). Women and Development literature mentions that core nations penetrating capital increases gender inequality. This can be avoided if women are no longer considered as members of family headed by male heads. The assumption that family members have unitary interests should be stopped and women's independence and contribution of economy in the global economy has to be recognized. (Wharton, 2005)

Marxist Inspired Theory: In the 1960s, Feminism re-emerged with contemporary Marxist ideals. These Socialist Feminists came up with a theory which separates patriarchal oppressions and class and analyzes this interpretation as a mechanism that will sustain both. They compared patriarchy with capitalism, but constantly changing. But they pointed out that demise of capitalism is not sufficient to end oppression of women. (Wharton, 2005)

Randall Collins (1975) related the typology of political structure with gender inequality. He makes distinction between nation states, monopolizing the legitimate use of force, household politics decentralized into male hands. Here men have legitimate right to coerce their wives physically. Dorothy Smith (1990) combined Marxist ideas with the insights of Michael Foucault on the Role of Knowledge in the reproduction of the "social relations of ruling", including both patriarchy and capitalism. She analyzed how 'male-dominated discourse' oppressed women. Patricia Hill Collins (1990) pointed out that knowledge produced by white males was a classist, racist and sexist "matrix of domination". That's why women also adopted male discourses in their profession in major institutions, where they provide 'alienated labour', oppressing them. (Wharton, 2005)

While considering the history of world crisis like epidemics and pandemic like the present COVID-19 situation, there is a scope to understand who we really are as human beings. It reflects our relationship with each other as well as with the environment. While there are several divisions of ethnicity, race, economic status etc., but epidemics have shaped history with the changes that took place in the moral, religious, philosophical, political and social spheres as well. There is not a vast area in the lives of human beings that the epidemic didn't touch. The aftermath of an epidemic is different in a high-income nation and low-income nations.

It's different in different ethnicities and race, and in different socio-economic spheres. Talking about the gender aspect after any epidemic, health-wise we know that women continue to live longer on average than men. But women are more prone to have higher chances of disease and disability. While men suffer from fatal diseases, women suffer from chronic ones. We can say that "women get sicker, but men die quicker"(Lorber J, 2002). Gender relations and gender roles lead to different exposures and responses to give out stress; different availability of resources, different responsibilities and expectations in care giving and domestic work, and different levels of domestic violence on women affects them disproportionately in acquiring health issues.

In healthcare provision also women are adversely affected by its preconditioned institutionalized sexism. Women are more likely to be diagnosed with mental disorders and Alzheimer's Dementia. Institutionalized form of sexism can be found within the medicalization of the issues related to women. Medicalization is the process of redefining the aspects of life as deviant which was previously considered as normal, and it is said to require medical attention to its cure. Throughout history till the present times many components of women's lifestyle have been medicalized, such as pregnancy, menstruation, childbirth, menopause etc. So medical interventions were not as effective as social interventions during critical situations like childbirth or pain. There is also post-partum depression because women in all social classes do not have access to standard models of medical facilities.

When England was ravaged by the Great Plague, Sir Isaac Newton (1965), and William Shakespeare (1606) did some of their best masterpieces, because neither of them had responsibilities of childcare. For those who have child rearing responsibilities like women, the outbreak of any infectious disease is unlikely to give them any time to focus entirely on one's career. Also, during any pandemic in the present times, social isolation and working from home in a white-collar job is much easier than the women victims of the pandemic back at 1950s, where across the world women will be a silent victim of any epidemic. (Mary, 2009)

The West has failed to learn from history during some pandemic outbreaks in the recent past and the 2014 Ebola outbreak in three African countries, the 2015-16 Zika and the most recent outbreaks like swine flu, bird flu and SARS. Sources who studied these incidents found that these pandemics have a long lasting and intense effect on gender inequality. While everyone's income rate was affected by the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, it was found that men's income returned to their usual ones much faster than the women's income. During any health issues of the children after the pandemic, it is the mother who has to take time off from their work for childcare. Because of the existing global workforce, all the unpaid caring labour will fall on women, be it the patients suffering from pandemic, the elderly people, as well as children who were kept home from school, everyone needs joining after. It can be noted here that not only women perform the role of caregivers, but they are paid less, and they also have the flexibility of performing the assigned roles.

During any disruptions, women's jobs are always considered as a lesser priority compared to men because women has remained lower earners compared to their male counterparts. Across the world, we have the phenomenon of the 'second shift', where the women have to take care of household chores after coming back from work, and they enjoy less leisure time than their male partners. If we look at single parents, the balance between earning livelihood and caring becomes a challenge, and most of the single parents worldwide are women. (Chafetz, 2006)

Another factor which can be seen after any epidemic is that the rate of girls dropping out of schools and colleges has risen, because sexual and domestic violence against women increased (Andrew R., 2016). There is also a distortion in the healthcare facilities because most of the resources were diverted towards the cause of the epidemic, and many women died during childbirth. It has also been established fact that women become victims of Dementia and Alzheimer's more than men, not just because of genetic factors but due to the social environment of patriarchal practices over a period of lifetime. So, the maternal mortality rates were high in the Third World countries, and sometimes they did not have access to contraception, adding up to maternal deaths.

What is even shocking to find out is that the death of women is unnoticed, while attention is shifted towards the crisis. In the book "Invisible Women", Caroline Criado Perez notes that 29 million papers were published in more than 15, 000 peer reviewed titles around the Ebola and Zika epidemics, but less than 1% of the works explored the gendered impact of the outbreaks. During the Corona outbreak also, there is no concrete gender analysis so far. (Caroline, March 2019)

In both first and third world countries there is a rise in the rates of domestic violence. The policymakers did not adopt a gender-neutral approach yet in the pandemic. The crisis of Coronavirus will be long-lasting one globally. But what is done now is going to affect the lives of millions of girls and women in such future outbreaks. (Policy Brief: The Impact of Covid-19 on Women, 9 April, 2020)

Since a long time, childcare and caring of the elderly were mostly assigned to women. Globalization spreads diseases faster than us humans can imagine. But gender inequality should not be excluded from epidemic studies. From all these discussions we can have a clear idea about the transformation of women's position globally, and it can be understood why it is more complicated in third world countries like India. Let us now look into the criteria of women's empowerment in all the important spheres of life.

Empowerment is creating a social environment in which one can control one's own life and make one's own decision. Empowerment can be achieved through knowledge gain and acquiring experience and power(Syed M.Hashemi, April 1996). Women education is important in empowering them. Though the structures of patriarchy often act as hindrance in accessing social resources and opportunities, different initiatives are operating to change society. Women's education is identified as the basic tool to empower women. Jawaharlal Nehru mentioned that women education is

important for whole family. Government has taken different initiatives to push for women's empowerment to secure women position in public sector.

First, the Yojna related to girl child education that launched in Panipat Hariyana, targets to generate awareness and improve the conditions of girl children. At first it aimed at decreasing Child Sex Ratio but then includes education and protection of girl children. The Yojna is initiated by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Health and Family Welfare, Women and Child Development. This policy is being implemented through campaign and district laws. This scheme is to empower women by maintaining sex ratio and educating them. (Dr. Rashmi Rani Agnihotri, 2018)

Secondly, Empowerment means controlling one's own life which is only possible through freedom. Freedom means not only Constitution rights but also to have equal access of social resources and economic independence. The scheme for online market to empower aspiring women launched in 2016 by Ministry of Women and Child Development. It is online marketing initiatives for women and NGO and self-help group to present their products and services. This is an opportunity for women to earn their own livelihood-a step towards economic empowerment. The services provided by the scheme include contact between customers and sellers, training, packing, workshop facilities etc. This initiative is accessible to all Indian women above 18 years. The policy is popular among young entrepreneurs because of the convenient method of payment and sign in process. (Basu, October 2016)

Thirdly, there are different schemes in India for various categories of women. The need and the challenges of rural and urban women are different. Some initiatives are for catering the need of rural women. Mahila Shakti Kendra is one of them. This initiative is to empower women in rural areas with skill development, health and nutrition and education. This initiative is operated through community involvement. It works in various levels. (Bhat, 2021)

Fourthly, it is observed that women's low participation in paid work is directly linked with the responsibilities they share in household activities. The involvement of women more in private sphere is hindrance towards their empowerment. Not only are that, but aspiring woman often also forced to withdraw themselves from the paid work due to lack of infrastructural support. Hostel for working women is another great initiative for those women. This initiative works in different ways to empower women. Hostel for working women ensure daycare facilities along with proper accommodation for the family. This scheme also aids with expansion of old hostels and construction of new. Rent charges are also fixed according to the salary. This initiative is great step towards women empowerment. (PM Awas Yojana List 2021, 2021)

Fifthly, Government also initiated plan to support and train women through employment program. Economic independence and proper education is the key to women empowerment. Every woman above 16 years is eligible to receive the support. This policy would benefit women in many ways. The scheme is accessible for women from different background. (Ministry of Women & Child Development, Govt. of India)

Sixth, to save the children and to empower them with education, parents' support is mandatory. Government provides some opportunities to the family also to secure the lives of children. Government supported saving scheme for girl children with high interest is another step for women empowerment in future. The girl child can access 50 percent of the money after 10 years for higher education. (Asher, 2018)

4. Conclusions

To conclude, it would be wise to reverberate the important issues discussed throughout this chapter, to find a reasonable solution to this ever-existing inequality. Although a lot is discussed about the public-private gender divide, most of the gender-neutral policies and legislations are only popularized in the public sphere, but not much is implemented and practiced in the private spheres. During this recent COVID-19 pandemic, reports show the increase in domestic violence against women, increased dropout rates of girls from schools and colleges and increase in women unemployment in India. It is a known fact that the actual data is not available to us because all the cases are not coming to disclosure. Family is the biggest social institution that creates or breaks gender inequality. One big reason for all these inequalities which works as a barrier to women's empowerment is that women do not have the decision-making choices in big matters of their households. Although women are employed, their income is only considered as a supplementary source for supporting their husband's income, and it is not used to fulfill major financial responsibilities of the family. Unless women take up the bigger financial responsibilities to fulfill, their position in the family will remain as a secondary entity. Moreover, it is essential to provide education to the girls and make them efficient and aware to make decisions and take up responsibilities. Education of the girl child should not be neglected and making them financially capable is nobler than marrying them off. The laws, policies and schemes decided by the government need to be anti-discriminatory in nature. And besides all the women's movements and initiatives in the public sphere, it is important to empower the younger generation of girls in both private and public spheres to have an impact in the future.

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