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**Irony of Gender Employment**

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The title of any text is often a signpost for the meaning of the text. The very fact that gender still acts as a metric in the current equal opportunity driven world of employment makes it a monumental rift within this already untraversable labyrinth of professional work.

The social formation of gender, and the norms associated with it, has not only led to discrimination and the consequential gender wage gap, but has also given rise to other issues like huge losses in educational attainment and gender inequality.

As per the official statistics published by Smile Foundation, the literacy rate of India is at 65.38%, with male literacy at 75.85% and female literacy at 54.16% (Smile Foundation, n.d.). Where women are not allowed to even attain the most basic right of education, getting involved in a professional career seems like a far cry. Unfortunately, this does not end here. Even if families consider educating their daughters, the next and only step they want to hop onto is their marriage, which entails a fresh set of issues like domestic violence and marital harassment. The few who get to work for their career, end up facing discrimination at their workplace and threats to safety and security.

The primary questions are- how can one gender supersede the other, when both belong to the same species? What led to this gender disparity resulting in conflicts about superiority and inferiority? Patriarchal thought has always been about men assuming the central role of a leader and thus, oppressing the 'weaker gender'. Their psychology and mindset has always spoken for the best of them and they have always assumed their role of the 'giver'.

Individual accounts, experiences as well as research, already back the facts but given the consistent insecure behaviour exhibited by some patriarchal constituents, when their power is challenged, it indeed becomes a necessity, more than a priority, to understand its origin.

One such idea was introduced by the Father of Psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, whose theory called Penis Envy or Phallic Theory (2018) did make things clearer for phallus owners and opaquely confusing for the ones without it. Outrightly rejecting the natural anatomy of human bodies, he introduced a theory in which he claimed that women tend to develop jealousy or an inferiority complex as they do not have a penis and thus suffer from 'Penis Envy'. Similarly, he elucidates how a man, who is a phallus owner, has the ability to give and therefore, stands on a higher pedestal. On the other hand, women, being the takers, are inferior to them, which results

in a situation of gender disparity. It is sardonic how both are equally important for the process of reproduction yet the gender gap created is on the basis of a phallus and the power it carries, which in the greater picture leads to women being treated as commodities- an idea that Luce Irigaray (Irigaray, n.d.) talks about in her essay *When Goods Get Together*. Like other avaricious things, they are being exchanged by men, among men and to men. They are thus enslaved within this pre-defined space created by men. This causes a rift and affects the societal norms of education, career and basic rights.

Having said so, these patterns of differences create a drastic impact on the availability of opportunities for women and have also paved the path for multifarious stereotypes about them. In a research paper published by Mari Mikkola in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy titled *Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender* (Mikkola, 2017), she mentions a theory by Geddes and Thompson who argued that the social and physical traits of women limit their working abilities. They remarked how women have a tendency of conserving energy and thus are sluggish, passive and uninterested whereas men exhibit the exact opposite characteristics making them more suitable for politics.

Geddes and Thompson also concluded that women should not be granted political rights because first, they would not know how to exercise them and second, due to their biology, it would be futile to grant them those rights in the first place.

Another interesting idea mentioned in the paper was that in the 1970s, it was argued that women should not become airline pilots because of their hormonal imbalance every month. Apart from such gender stereotypes, women in the workplace face a hard time finding a job that resonates with their skill set and if they do find one, they are subjected to patriarchal domination only to face atrocities like gender-based wage gaps. Irrespective of their skills and capability of doing their job efficiently, they are paid lesser than their male counterparts.

In an article published in *The Economic Times* (Bhattacharyya, 2019) the gender pay gap is higher in India with men earning 242 INR every hour followed by women earning 46 INR less. As per data, the pay gap varies highly with skillset and is the highest at 15% in favour of men. On similar lines, key findings from the Third Annual Survey titled *Women of India Inc*,

undertaken by *Monster.com*, shows that nearly 60% women face exploitation at their workplace and almost one-third of them find it difficult to secure a management job. In addition to demanding a fair and just pay, women also have to consider the possible breaches of safety before taking up a job. Around 50% women, especially from the IT/ITES industry, find night shifts either dangerous or not preferable at all. Furthermore, the ability of women to excel in jobs is undermined by society's preconceived notions of the aftermath of marital and maternity life of women and how it limits them to do certain things. 46% women feel that maternity leads to the assumption that they will resign, followed by the misunderstanding that women cannot put the same or more number of hours like men after they get married (Bhattacharyya, 2019).

The statistics and data published by the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) (Wikipedia contributors, 2020) recently found that the average wage of women workers was Rs. 1815 while the average wage for men was Rs. 3842. In addition to this, SEWA also mentioned top causes leading to the wage disparity, as follows:

1. Occupational Preferences: The society has decided the jobs for women. Be it the rural or the urban sector, women have been assigned jobs based mostly on muscle power and the tediousness of it. Women dry and store grain, whereas ploughing and harvesting are a man's jobs.
2. Cultural Barriers: Given how the society views childcare as a woman's job, in interviews conducted by SEWA, they found that women in rural India were asked to either leave the village or give up their property rights (if any) if found seeking jobs irrespective of their dire need to sustain their family.
3. Education & Training: As mentioned at the beginning of the essay, the rate of women literacy is lower than that of men, leading to a reduction in job opportunities.
4. Unpaid/Unjust Salary: Two-thirds of women either work in unpaid jobs or face gender wage gaps where their male counterparts are being paid higher, that too with additional incentives.

In conclusion, this discrimination has created social imbalance between the sexes and has led to a gender gap between multiple spheres of life like education, profession, marital life and basic rights. We are living in a makebelieve bubble that claims it to be a 'one person's job', which needs to burst by us - equally and utterly.

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