Discrimination Faced by Urban Women in Educated Societies and its Manifestation

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Abstract

Patriarchal norms are deeply embedded in society in the various forms of discrimination faced by a woman. Some educated women and the other members of society who live in an urban society still face discrimination in their home life, work-life, legal and political structures and economic opportunities. Discrimination against women begins even before they are born as most parents want to have a male child and it follows them throughout their lives, from their early years to their old age. While the government has formulated various schemes for the empowerment and equality of women, they are usually poorly implemented and have various loopholes. This paper seeks to bring forth these more subtle but deadly discriminatory practices that are not overt but very prevalent.

Keywords: *patriarchy, discrimination, urban woman, casual sexism, sexual abuse, sexism, educated society, manifestation*

1.0 Introduction

Discrimination is an unfair and prejudicial treatment of people and groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, age or sexual orientation. The human brain naturally forms categories to make sense of the world. Very young children quickly learn the difference between boys and girls. The values we place on different categories are learned– from parents, peers and the observations that are made about how the world works. (American psychological association, 2019).

Urban women are discriminated against in their workplace, at home and society at large. In more educated urban areas, more awareness and education is surrounding the fair treatment of both the sexes. Discrimination against women is not overt but usually subtle and well-masked. This paper talks about the discrimination and struggles faced by women living in metropolitan societies in everyday life.

If a woman is treated differently than how a man would be treated in the same situation, the possibility is that an underlying sexist prejudice is at work. Sexism is a form of prejudice and stereotypical thinking, in this case, based on gender. Sometimes, these prejudices can be quite obvious and intentional while other times they are subtle and quite thoughtlessly or casually tossed in a conversation. Instances like rape, sexual assault or abuse are all too obvious forms of sexism that undermine and humiliate a woman. Not-so-obvious forms of sexism that are parts of everyday conversations are hard to be identified as sexism. Sexist attitudes and behaviours that are intentionally or unintentionally practised and propagated in the society can be called casual sexism. Most women face this daily.

However, any form of a prejudiced thought, speech or behaviour that undermines the equal position and rights of women in the society and has an undertone of discrimination against them on the grounds of their gender, is fit to be termed as sexism against women. (*CASUAL SEXISM*, 2020) Often, behaviour that is casual and sexist, such as harmless jokes, can progress into more serious forms of discrimination on gendered grounds or sexual harassment. Casual sexism in the workplace can have serious effects on the well-being of workers and remains a troubling issue despite recent achievements in women rights. (Shine Lawyers., 2017)

Patriarchy is a social system in which men hold primary power, predominate in the roles of political leadership, moral authority, special privilege and control of property. They also hold power in the domain of the family, as fatherly figures. In India, especially in the North, the society is patriarchal. Many patriarchal societies are also patrilineal, meaning that the male lineage inherits the property and title. Here, the female alternative is a matriarchy. Historically, patriarchy has manifested itself in the social, legal, political, and economic organization of a range of different cultures. (Nirola, 2017)The analysis of patriarchy and its effects plays a major role in this paper to understand what causes the above-mentioned discrimination. Even after people have been made aware of the issues faced by women, they continue to discriminate against them. It is embedded in the minds of most people, that men are superior to women in every way and that their only role is to bear children. While sexism is not seen this plainly or starkly, it often is the underlying tone of many conversations and actions, many of which people fail to even realise.

Having seen these issues, this paper seeks to understand the challenges an urban woman faces every day. It seeks to show that the society that projects a progressive facade is just that- a facade. Most people don't believe in the equality of the sexes and that is reflected in how women are treated even in an educated and aware society.

2.0 Life cycle of a Woman: Different stages where a woman faces discrimination

Discriminatory gender norms are not only upheld through the rules of behaviour in everyday life that children quickly internalise – at home, at school, in the workplace, at markets, and in other public places– but also by wider social institutions. (Overseas Development Institute, 2015). A woman faces discrimination at every juncture in her life. This paper discusses the life cycle of a woman and the discrimination she faces throughout her life in various forms at each stage.

2.1 At Birth

The birth of a girl, so goes a popular Hindu saying, is akin to the arrival of Lakshmi - the four-armed goddess of wealth. That should assure pride of place for women in Indian society, especially now that the country is growing both in global influence and affluence. In reality, India's women are discriminated against, abused and even killed on a scale unparalleled in the

top 19 economies of the world, according to a new poll by the Thomson Reuters Foundation. The survey, polling 370 gender specialists, found Canada to be the best place to be a woman among G20 nations, excluding the European Union economic grouping. Saudi Arabia was the second-worst, after India. (Reuters, 2012)

2.1.1 Son Bias

Son bias can reflect deep-seated perceptions (rooted in culture and religion) of the relative roles and values of boys and girls/men and women. Son bias is often exacerbated in communities where daughters are perceived as an economic drain on the family because they will join another household upon marriage and this makes son bias very prevalent in India. Son bias can also be compounded by the fact that economic opportunities are often gendered, so parents perceive that it is more worthwhile to invest in boys. (Overseas Development Institute, 2015)

2.1.2 Boy is a boon

While in urban areas there is no female infanticide or foeticide, a girl is still seen as the inferior sex. When a boy is born couples are relieved, and if a girl is born, it usually gains them pitiful glances from those around them. There exist multiple *yagnas*, pujas, special food items, and positions to try during conception for couples to be able to conceive a boy.

The above shows how much even educated people value the birth of a boy. On the birth of a boy, the family distributes sweets that are considered superior, like "*ladoos*". However, when a girl is born, which is usually a disappointment, the family distributes inferior sweets like "barfis" or "*pedas*".

2.2 As a girl grows, up to the age of 10
2.2.1 Social Conditioning

Subtle social conditioning begins at this stage when girls are told to serve their brothers and fathers from a very young age. They are not allowed to play with any "boyish" toys like cars but are often forced to play with dolls and toy kitchens.

Additionally, stories featuring the 'Damsel-in-Distress' and 'Prince-Charming-Saves-the-Day,' tropes, which are read to children as bedtime stories, are also responsible for converging our

child's thoughts to the existing societal expectations of gender roles and guidelines. (*Social Conditioning and Children: An Evolutionary Psychology Perspective – Brighter Minds*, 2020)

2.2 Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse becomes prevalent at such a young age in girls. Overall, nearly 42% of Indian girls have gone through the trauma of sexual violence before their teenage years. (Mannat Mohanjeet Singh, Shradha S. Parsekar, Sreekumaran N. Nair, 2014) Severe forms of sexual abuse include:

a)   Assault, including rape and sodomy

b)   Touching or Fondling a child

c)   Exhibitionism- Forcing a child to exhibit his/her private body parts

d)   Photographing a child in nude

Other forms of sexual abuse include:

a)   Forcible kissing

b)   Sexual advances towards a child during travel (Dixit, n.d.)

The most vulnerable age is between 3-7 years. The perpetrator is usually a known individual like uncles, drivers, bus attendants, teachers and sometimes parents or grandparents. They are individuals, whom the child trusts and are usually the ones to take advantage of this misplaced trust.

2.3 An early teenager, from the age of 11-15

2.3.1 Education

As adolescent girls enter middle school, they face multiple types of discrimination. A girl is not given the same athletic opportunities as a boy. Girls have different standards from boys when it comes to uniforms, they must dress a certain way, have their skirt a certain length as it is "distracting to boys", leaving all responsibility with the girl and no accountability on the boy's part.

2.3.2 Stereotype threat

One of the most damaging impacts is a phenomenon called "stereotype threat." This refers to the impact of internalizing stereotypes about your group and having that impact your academic performance—this has been documented in the research of Steele & Aronson (1995) and Aronson & Williams (2004).

Aronson explains, "When social conditions threaten basic motives—our sense of competence, our feelings of belonging, our feelings of control—this can dramatically influence our intellectual capacities." He goes on to say, "These studies shed considerable light on how stereotypes suppress the performance, motivation, and learning of students who have to contend with them, and they suggest what educators can do to help. "For example, students of colour underperformed in similar measures when students were asked to mark their gender or race on their test papers. In cases where students were not "reminded" of this group membership—and as a result, the associated stereotypes—students performed much better. Another study confirmed that girls performed better in math assessments when stereotype threat was reduced (Quinn & Spencer 2001). (*The Danger of "Boys Will Be Boys,"* 2014)

2.3.3 Slut-shaming

Slut-shaming is a form of bullying where girls are targeted through degradation or humiliation for their sexuality. Girls are often ridiculed for the way they look, the way they dress and their presumed level of sexual activity. One-third of all middle and high school students experienced having someone make unwelcome sexual comments, jokes, or gestures about them. According to a study conducted by the American Association of University Women, slut-shaming is one of the most common forms of sexual harassment that students in middle and high school deal with. (Slut-Shaming: The Scarlet Letter of the 21st Century, 2020)

2.3.4 Casual Sexism

Girls begin to face casual sexism as a result of social norms and gender roles being enforced in many homes and schools. This is the not-so-obvious form of sexism that is part of our everyday conversations that are hard to be identified as sexism. Sexist attitudes and behaviours that are intentionally or unintentionally practised and propagated in the society can be called casual sexism (*CASUAL SEXISM*, 2020). This manifests itself in comments about girls

being weaker, or inferior at sports. Slut-shaming as mentioned above is also a form of casual sexism. Boys being allowed to play till later or go to more places is another such example of the same phenomenon.

2.3.5 At home

At home, girls are introduced to chores and are expected to learn how to cook and clean, but their brothers are usually allowed to skip these tasks. There are usually different sets of rules for girls and boys, regarding where they go, when they are to return and with whom they spend their time. Boys usually face much more flexible regulations, whereas girls are more controlled.

2.3.6 Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse increases in this age between 11-15 years. In most of the cases, the child was sexually assaulted or abused in public places like urinals, buses, local trains, etc. Unfortunately, only serious cases are reported to the police and more than half of the accused arrested are granted bail (Dixit, n.d.). The effects of child sexual abuse can be long-lasting and affect the victim's mental health. Victims are more likely than non-victims to experience the following mental health challenges:

a)   About 4 times more likely to develop symptoms of drug abuse.

b)   About 4 times more likely to experience PTSD as adults.

c)   About 3 times more likely to experience a major depressive episode as adults.
(*Children and Teens: Statistics | RAINN*, n.d.)

2.4 As a late teenager, from the ages 15 to 19
2.4.1 Education

In school, there is a divide between the subjects based on gender. Girls are told that Science is for boys and Humanities is for girls. Girls are further discouraged from sports and are encouraged to take subjects like Home Science. Some teachers begin to favour boys and more attention is given to them. David Sadker outlines many examples of how this impacts students in his 2002 article, *An Educator's Primer to the Gender War*. He explains that teachers give more attention to the "more active" boys and have less academic contact with the "quieter" girls, and although more girls are identified for gifted programs in elementary schools, by high school

fewer girls remain in gifted programs. (*The Danger of "Boys Will Be Boys,"* 2014). Rules about uniform get extremely stringent. If a boy and a girl are found engaging in sexual behaviour, most times the boy is not held accountable and the entire blame falls on the girl. Slut-shaming is at its most rampant at this age.

2.4.2 At home

At home, girls begin to notice the disparity in how she is treated with her brother or other male friends more than ever. Girls are often not allowed to step out after sunset. Girls are expected to be submissive, docile and shy, and not to be outspoken, opinionated and mischievous. Similarly, girls' behaviour is closely linked to notions of honour, shame and prestige, with girls feeling they are under the close and continued scrutiny of society. Hence, girls are constantly under pressure to think about the family name and honour in their daily lives, ranging from the clothes they wear to the way they behave in public.

2.4.3 "Boys will be boys"

The expression "boys will be boys" attempts to explain aggressive behaviours that a small number of children exhibit by linking them with "natural" or "biological" impulses, without examining other reasons for the aggression. Linking aggressive behaviours with a child's sex assigned at birth ignores all the other environmental (family, media influences, messages at school, etc.) and individual factors (personality, nutrition, body chemistry, etc.) that might be influencing behaviour. It creates an easy excuse to fall back on so adults don't have to examine other reasons for such aggressive behaviours.

It is also often used to justify schoolyard bullying—often very extreme cases that are violent and homophobic—and causes many adults to accept negative behaviours as "natural." (*The Danger of "Boys Will Be Boys,"* 2014)

2.4.4 Sexual abuse

India is home to 19% of the world's children. As per the 2001 census, about 440 million individuals in India were below 18 years of age and constituted 42% of the total population. A total of 33,098 cases of sexual abuse in children were reported in the nation during the year 2011 when compared to 26,694 reported in 2010 which increased by 24%. A total of 7,112 cases of

child rape were reported during 2011 as equated to 5,484 in 2010 depicting a growth by 29.7%. India has the world's largest number of child sexual abuse cases- for every 155th minute a child, less than 16 years is raped, for every 13th-hour child under 10, and one in every 10 children sexually abused at any point of time. (Mannat Mohanjeet Singh, Shradha S. Parsekar, Sreekumaran N. Nair, 2014) Data shows that close to 77 per cent of the girls in the age group of 15-19 faced sexual violence from their current partner or husband. In 6 per cent of cases, the perpetrator was a relative, while 4 per cent said it was a friend or acquaintance who sexually assaulted them. Cases of stranger rape or sexual violence in India for the age group stood at a mere 3 per cent. (Staff, 2014)

According to 'Crime in India, 2014' of National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), crimes committed against children were observed as 20.1 per one lakh population of children (up to 18 years of age). A total of 10,854 cases of child rape were reported in the country during 2015 as compared to 13,766 in 2014 accounting for a decrease of 26.8 per cent during the year 2015. However, the number of cases of child sexual abuse under the POCSO Act has increased. There has always been ignored and at times certain level of acceptance and tolerance to gender-based violence against women and children in India. We assume that certain things are bound to happen and will happen to women and children if they cross the "line of morality" put forth by our patriarchal society Children are viewed as not yet fully developed citizens. Their values and voices are mostly absent in public discourses on issues that directly imply them. They are taught to 'respect' the absolute authority of adults without even the slightest critical engagement. Their opinion may be regarded as 'disrespectful.' (Dixit, n.d.)

2.5 As a young adult from the age of 19-25

2.5.1 Education

Many girls are denied further education. Limits on girls' mobility and the high value placed on virginity before marriage in some cultures affect girls' access to education. Parents can be reluctant to send girls to mixed colleges where they can form relationships with boys, or fear they may interact with (or be harassed by) boys and men while travelling to and from college. (Overseas Development Institute, 2015b)

2.5.2 Pressure to marry

Despite providing quality upbringing to their daughters, parents start acting outlandishly when they are in search of a life partner for their little girls. No matter how educated or modern they are, their mind-set remains old-fashioned which hasn't changed even after generations. (2016)

2.5.3 Workplace discrimination

Discrimination in the workplace is based on certain prejudices and occurs when an employee is treated unfavourably because of gender, sexuality, race, religion, pregnancy and maternity or disability. (Benstead, 2020)

The pan India survey of organisations was launched by Confederation of Indian Industry's (CII) Indian Women Network (IWN), in association with Ernst and Young (EY). Some of the major challenges that hinder the progress of diversity and inclusion initiatives include unconscious bias, ineffective implementation of policies, fewer women in leadership roles and lack of awareness about the benefits of gender diversity, the survey noted.

Moreover, 33 per cent female respondents believe that there are different performance standards and expectations for male and female employees working at the same level. (2018) The survey by the Young Women's Trust found that 12 per cent of respondents were unsure about hiring a woman, even though it is illegal to make recruitment decisions on this basis. 14% of male HR decision-makers held that view, as did 10% of the females. Although this is a significant finding, it represents some progress since, as much as 16 per cent of male HR decision-makers expressed their reluctance to hire women in 2018; while in 2017 the figure was even higher at 18 per cent. (Solicitors, 2019)

A woman has to work three times as hard to gain the respect of her peers. Women are taken less seriously and sometimes ignored altogether. Often if a similar idea is shared by a woman and a less deserving male counterpart, he would earn the credit. Sexually offensive office banter is a part of every day and women who speak up against this are seen to be lacking a sense of humour.

2.5.4 Legal

Although there are several laws to protect women against all sorts of violence yet there has been a significant increase in the episodes of rapes, extortions, acid attacks etc. This is due to delay in legal procedures and the presence of several loopholes in the functioning of a judicial system. (2018) The Indian government's failure to properly enforce its sexual harassment law leaves millions of women in the workplace exposed to abuse without remedy, Human Rights Watch reported. The government should urgently ensure compliance with its 2013 Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, or POSH Act as it is popularly known.

The 56-page report, "'No #MeToo for Women Like Us': Poor Enforcement of India's Sexual Harassment Law," finds that women in India are increasingly speaking out against sexual abuse at work, in part due to the global #MeToo movement. However, particularly in the informal sector, women are still constrained by stigma, fear of retribution, and institutional barriers to justice. The central and local governments have failed to promote, establish, and monitor complaints committees – a central feature of the POSH Act – to receive complaints of sexual harassment, conduct inquiries, and recommend actions against abusers. (*India: Women at Risk of Sexual Abuse at Work*, 2020)

2.5.5 Street harassment

Street harassment, which is more commonly known as "catcalling," usually entails a loud whistle or comment of a sexual nature made by a man or group of men to a passing woman. In some cases, catcalling involves honking car horns at passing women, flashing vulgar gestures, self-exposure to a woman, and even inappropriate grabbing. While most men who catcall would argue that their comments are purely complementary and should not be considered a big deal, this type of harassment can easily instil fear and even leave long-lasting psychological effects, experts say. Unfortunately, even in today's social climate, women are still expected to simply ignore the shouting and whistling. (*Catcalling: Why Men Do It and What Women Should Do about It*, 2019)

2.5.6 Sexual abuse

According to government data, nearly four women are raped every hour in this country. Realistically speaking, that means only about 90 women each day find the courage to report that they have been sexually violated. The real number, probably way higher, never gets captured as many rapes go unreported, buried under shame, confusion and fear.

Public data also shows that the majority of rapes are often perpetrated by persons known to the victim, including family and neighbours. Reporting this often risks inviting stigma on the victim rather than on the accused because in our rancid rape culture some of us also question the victim's behaviour that brought on the predator.

For the brave few who overcome this social assault, there are more tribulations to be had — from truculent cops, legal cases that go on for months, and even death. (Economic Times, 2019)

2.5.7 Case study

In December 2012, Jyoti Singh, a 23-year old student died from her injuries after being gang-raped by six men in a bus travelling on main roads in the Indian capital, Delhi. Singh, who was a medical student in the midway of completing her education consistently performed well and besides her studies had to work night shifts to pay her way through college. She worked 7 to 3 am in an international call centre, IBM for a minimum wage of just 35 pence after attending her regular course of study as her family sacrificed everything for their only daughter's future career. Singh's family had hopes that she would succeed with her career and help them out of the abject poverty. However, things changed as the victim accompanied her male companion, a software engineer boarded a chartered bus on their way home on the night of the incident. The bus they boarded was driven by a group of men consuming alcohol on the bus. In the bus, besides the victim and her friend, there were only six others including the driver and a minor (The Times of India: Dec 18, 2012). The group of men on board taunted the couple questioning them what they were doing alone at that late hour when Singh's male friend who became suspicious and objected as the bus deviated from its normal route.

The scepticism of the woman's male companion ensued to a scuffle with the others in the bus. Singh was dragged to the rear end of the moving bus and when he resisted, both Singh and her male friend were battered by the joyriders. The woman was brutally tortured and gang-raped, and

when he tried to intervene her male companion was knocked unconscious with an iron rod. As the victims, Singh and her friend fell unconscious due to the torture they were subjected to and the attackers robbed them of their clothes and belongings and threw them both out of the moving bus (The Hindu: Dec 23, 2012). Singh's internal injuries caused by the iron rod that the brutal attackers used to torture her were so severe that in the effort to save her life the doctors had to remove her intestine. The government of India transferred the critically-ill gang-rape survivor to Singapore for emergency treatment. Singh died from her injuries thirteen days later while undergoing treatment in Singapore. Experts have questioned the government's decision to airlift the woman who was on the ventilator and already provided with the best possible care by an expert group of doctors in India, alleging that it was not a medical decision but more of a political move. (The Hindu: December 28, 2012) Her case however sparked mass protests across India and captured international media attention. (Ignatius, n.d.)

2.6 Adult-28-50

2.6.1 At home

If a woman is not married by the time she reaches her late 20's she faces tremendous pressure from her. Women face a societal pressure of having it all by the age of 30 because society expects one to get married and to do so before the age of 30. (Digital, 2018)

If a woman does get married but does not have children, she faces another pressure altogether. She is made to feel inadequate for either not wanting children or for not being able to have children. A couple without children is seen solely as the woman's fault even if the male is the one to either not want children or have a reproductive issue.

If a woman does have children and continues to work, she is made to feel less than adequate both at work and at home. If a woman does have children and stops working, she loses stature and respect in her household. The breadwinner becomes the male and hence makes all important decisions and thus continues the cycle of patriarchy.

2.6.2 Workplace

According to a survey, 42 per cent female respondents said they face managerial bias. This bias is known to be present at senior levels and affects the growth of women in the workplace. (2018b)

According to recent research, one in eight employers have admitted that they would be reluctant to hire a woman who they thought might take time off to have children. A survey by the Young Women's Trust found that 12 per cent of respondents were unsure about hiring a woman, even though it is illegal to make recruitment decisions on this basis. 14% of male HR decision-makers held that view, as did 10% of the females. Although this is a significant finding, it represents some progress in as much as 16 per cent of male HR decision-makers expressed their reluctance to hire women in 2018; while in 2017 the figure was even higher at 18 per cent. Overall, one in seven HR decision-makers (14 per cent) said that their organisation took account of whether a woman was pregnant or already had children during decisions about career progression and promotion. Despite being illegal, the current figures again represent progress − 22 per cent said the same thing in 2018; while the figure in 2017 was 25 per cent.

These results reinforce the findings of research carried out in 2018 by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), which found widespread maternity and pregnancy discrimination against women. In all, 802 HR professionals took part in the survey which was carried out online by YouGov for the Young Women's Trust, a charity that supports women aged between 18 to 30 who are trapped by low pay or no pay. The fieldwork was carried out between 4 and 23 February 2019. (Solicitors, 2019b)

An exploratory study using the Critical Incident Technique was conducted to identify discriminatory factors that are prevalent in the Indian workplace, the nature of their interactions and their influence on organisational decisions. The study revealed the gender, the region of origin, education, marital status, age and caste as discriminatory factors that affect a number of organisational decision events, viz., recruitment, job allocation, transfers, promotion and termination. It was found that several of these factors operate simultaneously in an organisation. (C. Vijayalakshmi, Kamalpreet Dhaliwal and Rajen K. Gupta, 2006)

2.6.3 Inheritance

Women own only one-hundredth of the world's property, even though they make up half the world's population. Land ownership is a strong tool of empowerment that eludes them, despite the guarantee of legal framework. Privately owned land is overwhelmingly held in the name of men across rural and urban India. Women provide more than half of all agricultural labour yet one national-level survey revealed that less than 13 per cent of privately held land nationwide, rural and urban, was in the name of women. This national average has resulted from the inclusion of states like Kerala, where women own 43 per cent of landed property. Daughters inherit property from their mothers in a few matriarchal communities in the South. In northern states, women's right over property remains entangled in moorings of the past, despite progressive laws.

The gap between women's and men's education and income levels is narrowing gradually, women's participation has grown phenomenally in the labour force (from 19.67 per cent in 1987 to 25.7 per cent in 2001) but the disparity in property ownership remains stark and seemingly intransigent. Despite a significant amount of interest by the state, NGOs and a few International donor agencies in the recent years to increase women's access to emerging economic opportunities, there has been virtual silence in engaging with women's efforts to acquire or retain control over landed assets.

The Hindu Succession Act, brought into force on June 17, 1956, became the first gender-equitable law in India after the century-long British rule that excluded women from inheritance in rural Punjab. The Act amended and codified the law relating to intestate succession among Hindus and brought about fundamental and radical changes in the law of succession, making provisions for married and unmarried daughters, sisters, widows and mothers to inherit land with full proprietary rights to its disposal.

The apprehension of losing exclusive male rights over the lands rather than the ground reality made landowners of Punjab act in a rather unusual rush to abolish this Act. They tried to have it abolished through legislative procedures, simultaneously accelerating their attempts through the caste panchayats to control its fallout. (Shukla, 2015)

2.6.4 Extreme Sexism

In the case of India, sexual harassment along with what is called 'eve-teasing' is even more commonplace. In 2012, 24,923 rape cases were reported. This roughly means that 3 rape cases were registered every hour, every day in 2012. These are the cases that were reported. However, the actual number of cases is nowhere close to this because many cases go unreported. The idea of patriarchy is so deep-seated that it may be linked to religion as well. There are innumerable examples which directly indicate that various religions propagate sexist thinking and ideas. In Hinduism, menstruating women are not allowed into temples and other so-called 'sanctums' of worship. Before 1956, women were not even allowed to inherit a property in India. In Islam, women are not allowed to lead prayers in mosques. Even the Dalai Lama, who claims to be a feminist, recently said that, while he believed a female Dalai Lama would be possible, she would have to be attractive. (*Everyday Sexism In India And Why We Are So Blind To It*, 2017)

2.7 As an older woman, past the age of 60

Older women have more critical problems than older men. Due to social and traditional family structure, they are forced to live with many limitations. Hence, they find themselves marginalized and isolated all the time. As women live longer than men, a larger number of older women have to live the life of a widow in their silver years. Social marginalization, loneliness, isolation and even negligence in old age lead to basic violation of their human rights too. 89.38% elderly respondents (44688 respondents out of 50000) said that the status of elderly women within their families is lower than male counterparts because of their gender. (AGEWELL STUDY, 2015)

2.7.1 Inheritance

Most often, inheritance is passed from a man to his son or sometimes to his son and daughter, but if the male spouse dies first, often the woman is left to the mercy of her children to provide for her old age.

2.7.2 Loss of Identity

After the demise of her spouse, a woman who has spent the majority of her life taking care of him, often faces a sense of loss of identity. She doesn't know who she is, if not a wife or what she is meant to do with her time now that her husband has passed. Very often her focus changes to caring for another man, her son.

2.7.3 Sexual Abuse

Overall**,** older women report lower lifetime and past year rates of physical and sexual assault and associated negative psychologic consequences compared to younger and middle-aged women. Additionally, older women who experienced interpersonal violence report greater psychiatric distress, including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), than older women who have not experienced such events. (Joan M. Cook, 2011)

3.0 PESTEL Analysis

Analysis of women and discrimination faced by them in Urban areas, considering the following factors:

3.1 Social factors

3.1.1 Education

On educational attainment, India ranked 126 with a female to male ratio in the literacy rate of 0.68 in the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index (GGI), 2014. (Sumanjeet Singh, 2016) Many still believe that women are less worthy of the same educational opportunities afforded to men. While there is no denying that poverty, geography and other factors contribute to huge disparities in education, patriarchy justifies this denial of opportunity. It feeds the message that men should wield the power and women should occupy a subordinate position in all areas of society. This outdated, yet persistent, point of view fuels educational inequality and a host of other disparities along the lines of gender on national and international levels. (White, 2019)

3.1.2 Norms of Society

The most widespread and dehumanizing discriminations against women are based on a biased perspective. The traditional Indian society is a patriarchal society ruled by the diktats of self-proclaimed caste lords who are the guardians of archaic and unjust traditions. They put the burden of traditions, culture, and honour on the shoulders of women and mark their growth. (Reddy, 2018) Traditional patriarchal customs and norms have relegated women to a secondary status within the household and workplace (Sumanjeet Singh, 2016)

3.1.3 Safety of Women

For women in India, the safety statistics are grim. The National Crime Records Bureau in 2011 reported 228,650 crimes against women, including murder, rape, kidnapping, and sexual harassment. That year an International survey ranked India the world's fourth most dangerous country for women, behind only Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Pakistan. The treatment of women in public has been a frustration for generations, but it was the case of Jyoti Singh, the woman also known as Nirbhaya, that caused something to break in India—a long-held willingness to accept danger to women as part of daily life. (*How Women in India Demanded—and Are Getting—Safer Streets*, 2019)

3.2 Economic Factors

3.2.1 Inequality In Opportunities

Gender inequality is reflected in India's low ranking on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index (GGI), 2014, with scores below average on parameters such as educational attainment, economic participation and health and survival. On the criterion of economic participation and opportunities, India was ranked 134. Its female to male ratio in labour force participation was 0.36. But, despite these attempts, a considerable gender gap still exists. In fact, according to the Global Gender Gap Report (2015), the economic gender gap has widened by 1 per cent since 2006. (Malhotra 2015) (Sumanjeet Singh, 2016)

3.2.2 Economic Backwardness

Women constitute only 29% of the workforce but form the majority of the destitute in the country. There has been a failure in transforming the available women base into human resource. This, in turn, has hampered not only the economic development of women but also of the country' as a whole. (Reddy, 2018)

3.2.3 Wage Gap

Women in India earn 19% less than men, reflecting the high gender pay gap in the country, according to the latest Monster Salary Index survey released on Thursday. The gap has narrowed merely by 1% in 2018 from 20% a year ago. The latest data from online career and recruitment solutions providers indicates that the current gender pay gap in India stands at 19%, where men (Rs 242.49) earned Rs 46.19 more in comparison to women (Rs 196.3). (Bhattacharyya, 2019)

3.3 Legal Factors

3.3.1 Current Laws

The Government of India, along with various states, initiated several policies, programmes and schemes intended to reduce the gender gap and to boost women's empowerment over the 1989-2015 period. Some of these notable initiatives are-

1. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.
2. Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2000.
3. Laws providing equal rights to school Education.
4. Commission of Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005.
5. Prohibition of child marriage (Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006).
6. Guaranteeing equal benefits in employment (Equal Remuneration Act, 1976).
7. Maternity benefit schemes (Maternity Benefits Act, 1961 (amended 1995)
8. Preventing sexual harassment of women at the workplace (The Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redress) Act, 2013. (Sumanjeet Singh, 2016)

3.3.2 Implementation Gaps

Through all these years, attention has been only on developing and devising new schemes, policies and programmes. We have paid less attention to proper monitoring system and implementation short-sightedness, for example, despite the presence of 'The Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technologies Act' and various health programmes like Janani Suraksha Yojana and National Rural Health Mission (NHRM), our country has a skewed sex ratio and high maternal mortality rate (MMR)(Reddy, 2018).

3.3.3 Loopholes

Although there are several laws to protect women against all sorts of violence, there has been a significant increase in the episodes of rapes, extortions, acid attacks, etc. This is due to delay in legal procedures and the presence of several loopholes in the functioning of a judicial system. (Reddy, 2018)

3.4 Political Factors

3.4.1 The Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India

The ministry came into existence as a separate Ministry with effect from 30th January 2006; earlier, since 1985, it was a Department under the Ministry of Human Resources Development.

The Ministry was constituted with the prime intention of addressing gaps in State action for women and children for promoting inter-Ministerial and inter-sectoral convergence to create gender equitable and child-centred legislation, policies and programmes.

Subjects allocated to the Ministry are- Women and Child Welfare and Coordination of activities of other Ministries and organisations in connection with this subject.

3.4.2 NGOs

NGOs in India have spread like wildfire in the last decade. They are becoming the lifeline of marginalized and disadvantaged communities, giving people a reason to live. Led by an amazing and dedicated group of people, the NGOs are serving in different parts of the country. Women's empowerment is a major issue taken up by some of the organizations (Chandira, 2018)

3.4.3 Lack of political will

The still-pending Women's Reservation Bill underscores the lack of political will to empower women politically. Male dominance prevails in the politics of India and women are forced to remain mute spectators. (Reddy, 2018).

3.5 Technological Factors:

3.5.1 Safety apps

Women safety has become the utmost priority of the Indian government considering the increasing cases of crime against women. There are various safety apps present on the play store designed for the protection and security of women. (*Raksha - Women Safety Alert*, 2020) From tracking location and sending SOS signals to a specified list, these apps also connect to local police stations and NGOs.

3.6 Ethical Factors:

3.6.1 Foeticide

The sex ratio fell significantly after 1980 when ultrasound machines for antenatal sex determination became available. The sex ratio in second children if the first was a girl was even lower. Sex-selective abortions after antenatal sex determination are thus implicated. However, data on second children especially the excess of girls born to mothers who have a previous boy seen in the decade before the advent of antenatal ultrasound machines, suggests that other means of sex selection are also used. (*Missing Girls in India: Infanticide, Feticide and Made-to-Order Pregnancies? Insights from Hospital-Based Sex-Ratio-at-Birth over the Last Century*, 2020). Taking the life of an unborn child simply based on their gender has been deemed unethical by many.

3.6.2 Unworthy promotions to men

A man often gets a promotion, when his peer, a woman is more deserving, simply as he is a man. Patriarchy plays a huge role in the perception of a working woman being unfit to compete with a man, in every other sphere of life except the domestic one.

4.0 Conclusion

In an urban society, many individuals project a belief in the equality of the sexes but continue to put men at a higher standard than women. Even after people have been made aware of the issues faced by women, they continue to discriminate against them. A woman is discriminated against her entire life and in every sphere of her life. The magnitude of discrimination is extremely rampant but as a society, trauma-based feminism is employed. This is feminism not to promote equality but to safeguard women from harm and the trauma it may cause them. It is usually employed after an extreme case of violence or abuse and feminism or a feminist ideology is not practised in daily life.

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