Gender Discrimination Of Different Forms And Countries

If someone brought up the topic of gender preference, do you react by saying, ‘Gender preference? Really? Isn’t it a thing of the past?’ Your reaction is probably due to the fact that you see around you more girls among top-ranking students; more women having jobs, access to education, money and resources; more women holding positions of authority and making strides in all fields. But, what about all those girls and women who didn’t even get a chance to live?

Although the twenty-first century India is highly educated and developing at a fast pace, there is still a higher preference for a male child. Perceived as the alpha, the protector and provider, sons are considered as assets whether for political, economic or ritual reasons while daughters are considered burdensome liabilities.

As of 2015, according to statisticstimes.com, among all countries, India ranked 192nd with a dismal sex ratio of 106.98, which means there were only 93.47 females for every 100 males. Again, according to an article in the Lancet (2011), research data implies that ‘in India about 400,000 sex-selective abortions have taken place annually in recent years’!

Here are a few reasons for gender preference in India - socio-cultural factors like dowry, wedding expenses, custom of gift-giving, inability of girls to take care of parents after marriage, domestic violence, ill treatment by husbands and in-laws, ill treatment on account of giving birth to a girl, and so on. This gender preference goes hand-in-hand with gender discrimination.

Every year, The National Girl Child Day is celebrated on January 24. It was first initiated in 2008 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development to create awareness on a range of issues including education, health, and nutrition of the girl child.

Forms of Gender Discrimination in India

Gender discrimination manifests in many forms in India, right from birth to adulthood.

Fewer months of breastfeeding, below par medical care, insufficient nutrition, lack of prenatal, natal and post-natal care result in girls being more susceptible to illness, having poor health and shorter lifespan.

In cities, women employees face the glass ceiling effect and disparities in pay. Their non-inclusion in the decision-making processes at almost every level is also a widespread phenomenon.

Due to the wide prevalence of the patriarchal social system, a lot of women are still deprived of the right to own ancestral property, which is mostly given to the male child.

Not just an Indian Phenomenon

While India shows a high degree of gender inequality or gender discrimination, it isn’t the only

country where this phenomenon exists. In many countries around the world women are fighting for the right to vote, to choose what they wish to wear (if you remember the Burkini ban) and to own property, among others.

Horrific practices like Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and trafficking are highly prevalent in parts of Asia, Africa, Latin America, the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe.

Gender-based violence and honor killings are a global pandemic, and in some countries, women and girls fail to get even minimum protection against these horrific practices.

Amartya Sen spoke about the ‘missing women’, bringing to light the practice of female infanticide and female foeticide, which doesn’t give the girl a chance to even be born.

So, how can we change this scenario, which doesn’t favor the female child?

Since change begins at home, parents are the best agents of change. We can begin by looking at the positives of having a girl in the family and her contribution to the society.

Women are

Pillars of the future: Just as we say that the youth of today are the citizens of tomorrow, so is the same with our girls. They are the women of tomorrow. If we want to empower them, we must reduce inequality and gender gaps, and create strong women leaders. We have to let them live today and raise them to be those leaders of equality and development.

Change-makers: Brigham Young once said, “You educate a man, you educate a man. You educate a woman, you educate a generation.” Women are naturally more social and thus more inclined to help those around them. By bringing up their daughter with the right values and education, parents can kick-start the change and create a change-maker.

Multi-taskers: Women are much better at multi-tasking. They are taking up roles, which were previously the preserve of men, like CEOs, entrepreneurs, while handling the home and hearth with equal flair. In some cases, they are also the providers in the family.

Creators of inclusive spaces: Women possess qualities like perseverance, a nurturing spirit, empathy, sensitivity which, when combined with complementary traits like planning and organizing, are conducive to creating more inclusive spaces for people.

With such strengths that women possess, why should they continue to be sidelined? The girls of today are proving themselves equal to boys in every respect. They are distinguishing themselves as achievers in every field, from academics to sport to profession. They are successfully playing multiple roles in every sphere of life. Their will to develop and help others develop alongside is what can take our society forward. They are meant to be 50 percent of the population, their voices matter in creating a more equitable community. Moreover, they make a ‘house’ feel like ‘home’. So, go ahead and welcome the girl child with a warm embrace!