

Gender and Women Development in Nepal

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Abstract

Historically and socially, women were backward in going to the school that school was developed for men not for women. From many years, women had a power imbalance that favours men and had lead to discriminatory practices against women. Taking as a second position in the Nepalese society, women are discriminating everywhere. Many challenges are existing about gender inequalities in schools where implementing part is very weak. With the process of democratization in Nepal, women to some extent have been able to understand their rights, gender equalities, voice their claims against discrimination and demand their rights to equality in life and before the law. However, despite these valiant actions State and non state structures, have largely remained the same sites of oppression. The affirmative policy, provision, laws, programmes, difficulties, challenges and the critical situation of women are discussed in this paper. However, more needs to be done and needs to give more opportunity for girls and base on increasing access to literacy, formal, non formal and quality education for them as well as right and equal participation in right decision making in all level of development areas.

Keywords: Gender, women, discrimination, equal participation, development, decision making

1. Introduction

Gender refers some ideas and practices in society and it is about social meanings, social things and social matters (Holmas, 2008). However, gender is not only sex like male and female, men and women, and boys and girls. Gender is socially created social behaviors, norms values, rules and regulation of society that is after sex (Paudel, 2002). However with the name of social meanings, sex, things and matters, men are dominating and violating to women in Nepal. The interest of sociologists in the social construction of gender means looking at how society is functioning and going with organized shapes into particular type of women and men (Holmas, 2008). However, women and men are treating differently with gender inequality and increasing violence against women in society in our real life.

Gender is not sex like men and women as biologically defined (Paudel, 2002). However, with the name of gender, society divides people into women behave as womanly and men behave as manly and feel that women and men are different. Example is gender discrimination as discriminating for son and daughter and citizenship distribution only with the name of father.

Society and parents teach their children in different ways to live and act differently in everyday life. It is the level of understanding on gender in the past and used it differently by different cultures and groups in everyday life in the society and the strengths and limitations of different ways of thinking and learning to 'do' gender. According to the CARE Nepal (CARE-Nepal, 2013), gender is a social, cultural and psychological construct that refers to the differentiated constructed roles of women, men, girls and boys, assigned because of their gender.

Everywhere in the world, the roles of women and men are different from each other. These roles are also different depending on various factors, including where you are, to what generation you belong, and the era in which you live, in addition to class and ethnicity. Gender constructs must be understood within the context of inclusion and respect for human rights that are to be enjoyed equally by all.

Now, many people believe that women and men are equal. But still men are dominating toward the women because of patriarchy society which society is developed by men and that is called male dominated society where men are free to change and act but women need to depend with men in our society. Gender inequalities between women and men affect the impact on people of society in everyday life. In modern society where people think that the gender inequality should be end but still people who are educated, who are in high level and who are in political areas are dominating and behaving as manly in everyday life in our society

1.1. Literature Review

In Nepal, Population of Nepal stands at 26,494,504 and about 796,422 more females than males in the country (CBS, 2011). However, instead of having more power by women, they are taking less important in our society due to male dominating society. A patriarchal society where 90% of parents want to have two sons and one daughter, and 96% of parents prefer one son (Tuladhar, 2007). However, this data shows that preferring sons are more that means by birth parents are reproducing gender discrimination in our communities and still women are dominating by men and majority parents love to have sons than daughters. Because of this mind set, men are dominating women with many causes and forms of gender discriminations are emerging and increasing day by day.

Gender gap in education is still high. Total's literacy of the country is 65.9% and still 34.1% people are illiterate where female are less literate than men (CBS, 2012). However, gender gap is only one reason that treating as discrimination in girls education. Enrolment in primary school alone shows that only 45% are girls and as the grades go up there are less and less number of girls enrolled in schools (Tuladhar, 2007). However, it shows that how girls are less participating in school enrolment and getting less opportunities in decision making in important parts of schooling and social change due to less educated girls in Nepal. Weakness of people's perspectives on men and women, Nepalese society is developing a society for men and women are highly exploited and discriminated by men in everywhere.

The gender gap in literacy is as high as 22.6 percent between male and female and a steady improvement in literacy rates both in terms of overall literacy and in terms of gender parity (GON, 2010). However, gender parity is improving as giving more focus on girl's education. According to the report of SSRP (2010), Girls' education has been top priority since the fifth to ninth five-year plan and gender parity in 10th five-year plan in Nepal and The SSRP guides on gender parity, inclusion, and equity have guided the plan preparation process and have been integrated as strategic interventions in the Plan (GON, 2010). However, girls' education is not improving rapidly as people are thinking today.

According to the given priority for girls' education should be improved more and should not be talking about many girls are uneducated but the situation is not like this as we are thinking due to many reasons like political instability, peoples' perspective on girls' education, mentality of taking corruption, lack of honest, lacking opportunity by trained people and not giving important for trained, honest and needy people in right places.

Men and women share similar dignity and rights in the eyes of God. Relationally they are equal and every religion did not say that men and women are different (G. Pradhan, personal communication. 2013, 05, 12). However, they have different experiences, needs and expectations. Both men and women are subjected to gender-defined roles in the family, community and wider society. Frequently, the roles assigned to women are undervalued in comparison to men's roles.

Women in Nepal considered as second-class citizens and targets of multiple forms of discrimination are unfortunately still bearing the brunt of this archaic approach to structuring society. The insistence on the family as the foundation of all society has lead to women's very sexuality and reproductive rights being denied. Parallel concepts of honour and worthlessness converge in the form of violence against women being perpetrated on an almost daily basis. Socially, violence against women is accepted and practiced in Nepal. In the last 6 months, WOREC-Nepal has registered 873 cases (July-Dec, 2011). Among these cases 71 women were murdered due to different forms of violence against women. The trends consisted 2 women were killed alleged to be witches, 12 women murdered for lack of sufficient dowry, 101 women were raped (89 Rape, 12 mass rape. The cases show that the majority of were perpetrated by privileged classes who use violence as a means of control over women.

The recent gruesome murder of Geeta Dhakal by her husband, Ranjan Koirala, a high ranking Police officer is one many of the examples where agents of the state after committing a crime use their privileged position to ensure they are not brought to justice (WOREC, 2011). However, the impunity is a system created to serve the patriarch. Despite appealing to state officials and representatives to the Constitution Assembly members Geeta was forced to remain in relationship with her husband. Consequently, she was killed, cut up into small pieces, and burnt.

The threat of such violence is a daily reality for many Nepalese women. Such horrendous incidents discourage women outside Kathmandu from filing a case against their family members due to fear that if **“the women in Kathmandu”** are excluded from justice what chance is there for them. In one of the women's safe spaces, a victim from Morang district expressed that she would rather **“kill herself than wait for justice from such a failed state”**. (R. Sunuwar, personal communication. 2011,06 30) When the family as an institution is to be protected at all costs and is often a site of oppression and violence for many women there exists little hope of seeing justice done.

The Nepalese state is bound by a series of international treaties to prevent violence against women. It is bound by the principle of due diligence to prevent non-state actors from violating the rights of others. Mediation, as practised in Nepal, would seem then to contradict the State's obligation to due diligence exposing women to further violations and violence. As women in the frontline of change campaigning against social discrimination, they often become targets themselves. Family members, their communities and the political parties have all tried to silence these women as they advocate not against institutions such as the family but for equality within those very institutions. Women defenders who raise issues of domestic violence, land rights, sexual rights, globalization, Dalit rights, and Muslim women's rights are subjected to many forms of discrimination and stigmatization. State authorities unwilling to perform their duties and responsibilities very often do not welcome being reminded of their obligations under international and domestic law. Women, who remind them often, face horrendous odds as they document cases, confront perpetrators and struggle for justice.

1.2. Policy Review

According to Government of Nepal (GON, 2009), the law is assumed to be gender-neutral when in fact it may perpetuate gender discrimination, being a product of a culture with oppressive gender ideologies. Even where constitutional or national legal provisions uphold gender equality principles, religious or other customary laws that privilege men may take precedence in practice. However, the law describes that no one should not be discriminated to all with the name of gender, sex, race, religion, culture, social, caste and other.

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979) brought into international focus the rights of women as human rights, including the right to be free from discrimination. However, women in developing countries like Nepal are facing highly discrimination against women. Sometimes, women discriminate with the name of women and sometimes with the name of women are only for child reproduction. The Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2063 (2007) prohibits discrimination against women in any form merely for being a woman and every woman has equal right as men in society. No one can discriminate with the name of women. If discriminated to women they would be punished by law (UNDP, 2008). However, Nepal envisions a society that is free from gender based discrimination means all are equal in all the level. No one can discriminate with the name of gender like you are female and I am male.

Nepal is committed for gender mainstreaming through empowering women and ensuring their equal participation in all social and economic activities at program and organizational level (UNDP, 2008). However, this commitment about the goal is to mainstream gender equality and women's rights in all its activities and policy decisions and the provision has given to women as 33% reservation for women at both state and national levels politics. According to Nepal citizenship act,2020 and Nepal citizenship regulation.2049, clearly mention that a person who born in Nepal and whose father is a citizen of Nepal at the birth of the child shall be a citizen of Nepal and the young people who have their father they can get citizenship of Nepal (Sakha, 2007). However, this act and regulation creates discrimination among the women and with the name of mother, son and daughter cannot get citizenship of Nepal.

2. Analysis of Gender development

The reservations for women are increasingly being implemented at various levels of government. The government of Nepal has adopted a policy, which has a quota of 33% for women in the last parliamentary elections, and the new constitution declared that there should be 33% for women each local government level, one man and one woman must be elected (Sakha, 2007). However, 33% is not equal quota as compare with 67% for men in participation. Still this policy leads discrimination toward the women in Nepal but getting 33% participation and quota in all sectors is the sign of improvement, positive beginnings and addressing the gender equality by the nation. Culture is sometimes interpreted narrowly as 'custom' or 'tradition', and assumed to be natural and unchangeable which creates culture is fluid and enduring and dominant cultures reinforce the position of those with economic, political and social power, and therefore tend to reinforce male power (Holmas, 2008, pp. 21-30). However, culture and society is changing with equality and equity. Economic, political and social are main powers to have position but no one dominate women because women are more aware on existing economic, political and social situation in our society.

Interventions to challenge power imbalances proposed by local women's organizations or NGOs are often denied legitimacy, or where an international agency is involved, denounced as 'western' interference or 'cultural imperialism'. Many within the international community also remain resistant to goals of gender equity because they perceive these interfering with the most intimate domain in society. Some women have themselves defended ideas of 'culture' and 'tradition' in order to hold on to what little power they have, or as a form of resistance. Many women are coming with new concept and ideas on gender. They do not like to be compared as women are weak than men. So, needs to think with reflection on action through feminisms perspective (Cornwall, 2007). Nevertheless, today women are fighting from their own side and forcing government for gender equality in everywhere.

Women believe that women's body is their own private property, not for men. 'Personal is political and peace in patriarchy is war against women' (Paudel, 2002). However, It is oppression and violence against women to be gendered in the society and it is sign of was against women as being voiceless in patriarchy period. Relation to other and relation oppression is the one more important things which change the people perspective in the society. Private life and public issue play a role of changing in society. When private life become public issue, then some change emerge in the society. The 'Trick' sociological imagination means to know and understand the world that sees person or individuals as a product of the social world where they stay and live. (Mills, 1959). However, historically women and men are difference which is happening till now. There are changed something in thought but still gender inequalities are existed in the structural form in the society remain.

Sociologists' mentioned that a kind of change by looking at the pattern of large scale social change (Mills, 1959). However, it is not so easy but in terms of drawing a distinction between private troubles and public areas which leads social expectation and social organization on gender. Sociology of gender is not just

different between women and men but it is about social hierarchies and inequalities which arise from the social construction of gender. Women want to set their own agendas - which may imply redistributive action or tackling poverty that mainly talk and support from western feminists. So, today's women are highly believed on feminists for their development in Nepal.

3. Challenges and difficulties

In Nepal, we have been facing lots of challenges to make violence free mind, program, home, workplace, school, law and practice in favor of women. It's too difficult to implement laws whatever laws have been made by addressing women's issues. To distribute benefit equally including dignity, to make active participation of women in policy level, to change bad practices and give opportunity to women comparing to men are being challenges. In fact, to write in black and white paper is easy but to change practice and attitude is challenges.

- So, there are some difficulties at your home that how much your daughters, sisters, mothers are aware on this issue and getting equal opportunity in decision making in your family. Are men just opposite side against women?
- Second, our society is fully addressed by men for men.
- Discrimination in citizenship card in which only those people get citizenship who have father.
- Witch (Boksi) is another problem in our society that is traditional believe women are for using kerosene, bitten, excluded from village etc.
- Child marriage and early marriage.
- Law and provision about 33% for women and 67% for men which is totally challenge for women leads women discrimination and bias legal provision and procedure between men and women.
- No right to sexual expression and to make sexual decisions that are consistent with one's personal, ethical and social values.

4. The way out

People should be aware on gender and important of gender for women development. Gender is a common term where as gender discrimination is meant only for women, because females are the only victims of gender discrimination. Gender discrimination is not biologically determined but it is determined by socially and the discrimination can be changed by the proper and perpetuate efforts. Favoring one group over another only serves to call out the already existing gap. How do we solve for this? How we can address the problems of women. The answer is simple too unassuming for many to recognize: treat every person with equality. Sure, it's easier said than done, but isn't that true with everything worthwhile? Instead of being hypersensitive to details that don't matter, look at performance, values, skill set, and experience.

So, programmes and activities should be focused on gender implementation. Various movements, programmes are being carried out by the Government, voluntary organizations and by lot of social activities for women's development and against the gender discrimination. National law, policy, programmes and activities should be designed by both men and women.

4.1. Gender education

Education is a spark and machine for development and transmission of knowledge, skills and information for social change (Shukla, 1998). However, education is the main factor to reduce the gender discrimination in Nepal. Education makes people aware on gender policy, act and provision so that people feel aware on gender and gender discrimination. Education opens up a new horizon of life that helps people to decide which is right and which is wrong.

Education cannot be useful unless it helps women to understand their problems and circumstances. Today's education is not highlighted with people concerned and based on women centered and gender friendly education. So, today's society desire "meaningful education for all" (Pradhan, 1999, p. 12) that address to reduce the existing gender discrimination in Nepal. However, education should start from self, from you, from your family, community and your society so that you think hundred times before you discriminate and dominate to women at your home. Hence, educating women is the prime factor to combat gender discriminate and for the development of women. Not only the female, the society must be educated to give equal right for female.

4.2. Employment for women

Employment is a one important factor which makes women independence with others' people in family and society. Employment gives the income and improves the economic position of the women. Employed women are given importance by the family members and people in society. Employment gives the economic independence for the women.

4.3. Economic Independence

In Nepal, mostly women in the young age depends her father, in the middle age, she depends on her husband and in the older age depends on her son. Woman always depends on somebody for her livelihoods hence, independent in economical aspects are imperative for women's development. Economic independence will free the women from the slavery position and boost the self confidence. Economic independence of women also helps in the national economic development.

4.4. Empowerment opportunity and Self-confidence for encouragement for women

In Nepal, many people and even who work in government sectors are not empowering to women for national development and important decision making. Empowering women with the help of laws, education and employment will make the society to accept the women as an equal gender like male. Female also has all the potential and empowering women will help to use her full capability and mitigate the economic dependency of women.

Self- confidence makes women to encourage them for their development. Due to prolonged supplement, Nepalese women, an especially and unemployed woman hasn't had the self-confidence. Women need self confidence to fight against all the atrocities against her and to live self esteemed life. Hence, boosting the morale and self confidence of the women, is the key to eliminate the inferior complex of her.

4.5. Women participation in decision making

In the context of Nepal, women are not getting to participate in decision making. Even in the family as well as in the society the decision making power of women is denied. Mostly males make the importance decision in the family and in the society. Not only those men make and design the national law, policy and programmes for women. This makes women as voice less and destroys herself confidence and she feels less important in our family as well as in the society. So, to end gender discrimination women must empower to participate in decision making.

5. Conclusion

Just, getting different information for knowledge and skills is not much more important and necessary to be gender. The main important thing is how this knowledge, skills and perspectives could be used it in your everyday life in the society where you can think, react and act to be gendered to change people in the society. In Nepal, without the participation of women cannot achieve development and without women development is not possible to make a new Nepal. If we eliminate gender discrimination and gender issues which are directly affecting for women development, women will deliver all the potentials, skills, knowledge to develop the family, Society and the nation would be developed with new Nepal. Without giving equal participations of women in any sectors, women development is not possible and also nation development is impossible.

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