



INFLUENCE OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN BENGALI LITERATURE

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Abstract

If we look at the current social life, we see that women are present in almost all the high seats in different parts of the country and abroad. Yet women are still discriminated against. Women are victims of hateful and discriminatory behavior in all social, economic, political and religious spheres. At home, a girl is being raped by her father, is being raped in an educational institution, is being harassed at work, or is being paid less, and so on. And since literature is a mirror of society, its effect on literature is inevitable. We have seen how the poet Ishwarchandra Gupta has expressed gender inequality in his poems. Novelist Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay in his novel highlights the discriminatory treatment of widows. Rabindranath Tagore also showed how a woman has been repeatedly sexually discriminated against. Many Bengali writers have highlighted various aspects of gender inequality in their literature. We will discuss here why and how women are discriminated against in the society and how it has affected the Bengali literature.

Keywords: Gender Inequality; sexual harassment; Impact on Bengali Literature

Introduction: In today's twenty-first century society, women are everywhere. Whether it is in the field of education, in the governance of the country, in the social work, in the political aspect, in the battlefield, women are triumphant everywhere today. Today, the major positions in the country or abroad are held by women. But still when we open a newspaper or a channel, we always see the dirty aspects of violence against women or gender inequality. Whether at home or outside, women are victims of gender discrimination somewhere. Such as we know of Mary Wollstonecraft(1759-1797) who was a victim of her father's arbitrariness as a child. She wrote her famous book 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman'(1798) because she was a victim of gender discrimination. She claims equality of men and women in her book. According to Mary, women have fallen without getting the opportunity to practice pure knowledge. Economy was most important to her. According to her, the ability to earn a living gives people freedom, so



unless a woman achieves financial freedom, she will not get any freedom. Before the 20th century, women were widely discriminated against in the United States. Women did not have equal access to education and employment, property ownership, legal rights, the right to sue, the right to speak in public. John Stuart Mill(1806-1873) also paints a picture of gender inequality in his book ‘The Subjection of Women’(1869). There he showed how women have been discriminated against in the role of mother, wife and daughter. He said women were not allowed to do much work, so they did not get a chance to provide their qualifications. He has shown that women have been expelled for gender inequality from the work they have done. In the book, ‘A Room of One’s Own’(1929) Virginia Woolf(1882-1941) states that the main reasons why women are discriminated against are social and economic. To get rid of this inequality, women must overcome the formidable obstacles of exploitation, prejudice and economic subjugation in a patriarchal society.

Objective: We will discuss here where, how women are being subjected to gender inequality, what are the causes of this inequality and who is responsible for it, what is its impact on Bengali Literature and how this inequality can be eradicated.

Methodology: The paper is purely descriptive and based on secondary sources which have been collected from various sources like books, journals, reports, articles, newspapers, internets etc.

Overview and Result: Studies have shown that the journey of gender inequality starts from the family and then gradually spreads throughout the society. It is seen that if a family has a son and a daughter, then the parents admit the son to a good school. But the parents do not do that in the case of the girl child. The reason for this inequality, however, is much deeper. Because their argument is that at the last age the boy will give rice, the girl will not. Because after marriage she will go to her father-in-law’s house. Their thinking is not unreasonable. Because in a patriarchal society, girls do not give rice, boys give rice. But we also see the opposite of this idea. It was seen that in their old age the boy was not giving rice to his parents, their daughter was giving it. However, these aspects of inequality are more common in illiterate and poor families. In fact, the patriarchal society always sows the seeds of this inequality in our minds, thoughts and consciousness. We must remember here that after a child is born, whether we consider the child as a boy or a girl depends on whether we give them rice in their old age or not. On the other hand, we often notice that if a girl gives rice to her parents, we hear people say – “you see she is acting like a boy”. So, whether you are considered a boy or a girl depends on who gives rice to the parents in the old age. So we can say here – no one is born a boy or a girl, it is the social and economic structure that creates the idea of a boy and a girl according to needs. In this context, Simone De Beauvoir has rightly said, “One is not born, but rather becomes, a women.”

In many cases it is seen that sometimes women become the enemy of women due to gender inequality. A mother herself often wants her unborn child to be a boy. But if the girl is not a boy,



then both the mother and the daughter have to subject to extreme torture. For this reason, the study shows that the most important role behind the rape and abuse of a girl is played by her close relatives. So can't we ask the question, if a girl is a victim of gender discrimination in her family, how can she be safe outside the family? We also see that women being discriminated against in terms of wages. This is especially the case in the private sector. It can be seen that a man gets a daily wage of 200 rupees and a woman gets a daily wage of 120 rupees even after doing the same work. Since the author a village boy, he has witnessed these differences.

Impact on Literature: Now let's come to the words of Bengali Literature. We will try to give some examples of how women have been subjected to gender discrimination in Bengali Literature. We know of Ishwarchandra Gupta(1812-1859), a famous poet of Bengali Literature. It can be seen that women have been the victims of gender discrimination in several places of his poems. He clearly says in his poems that it is normal for the girls to take care of the house and worship. Why would they study? In the nineteenth century, he taunted English-speaking girls. So he wrote-

‘Agee meyegulo chilo bhalo brotoddhormo korto sobe.

Eka Bethune ese ses koreche are ki tader temon pabe..

Joto churigulo turi mere ketab hate niche jobe.

Tokhon A. B. shikhe bibi seje biliti bol kobei kobe..’’

We know Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay(1838-1894), a famous novelist of Bengali Literature. His two most famous social novels are ‘Bisabriksha’(1873) and ‘Krishnakanter Will’(1878). In both the novels, two widows are victims of gender discrimination. Their crime is that even though they are widows, why would they fall in love with other men? For this crime, the widow Kundanandini in the novel ‘Bisabriksha’ had to commit suicide by drinking poison and the widow Rohini in the novel ‘Krishnakanter Will’ was shot dead.

We know about the famous novel ‘Chokher Bali’(1903) by Rabindranath Tagore (1841-1941). A movie called ‘Chokher Bali’ has also been made based on the story of this novel. There Aishwarya Rai Bachchan herself acted. This novel also shows the widow Binodini being the victim of gender discrimination. Her crime is that despite being a widow, she has played some love game with Mahendra and has fallen in love with Bihari. For this crime she had to leave her home and become a Kashi resident. Mrinal, the protagonist of Rabindranath Tagore’s ‘Strir Patra’ story, is the victim of gender discrimination. The story shows that Mrinal and her brother once had a high fever as a child. Her brother died of that fever but Mrinal recovered. And this is where she hears sexist comments from neighborhood girls. They say that Mrinal is a girl, so she survives. Significantly, Mrinal did not hear discriminatory comments from men here, but



from women. So, here we find evidence that girls are the enemy of girls. In the story 'Mahamaya' we see that Bhavanicharan married Mahamaya to an old Brahmin who was on his way to death. Bhavanicharan never once wanted to know if there was anything like his sister Mahamaya in this marriage. Because his sister is a girl. Representatives of the patriarchy like Bhavanicharan do not care about the girls' own opinion. In the 'Didi' story, Shashi went to the magistrate against her husband to protect her brother's property. But the results have been terrible. Shashi had to be killed. It is her crime to protest as a woman.

Akhter Mahal Syeda khatun(1900-1928) in her novel 'Niyantrita' shows how a woman has to be the victim of sexist comments just to study. The protagonist of the story, Ayesha, is said to be the work of boys, not girls. The job of the girls is to take care of the house and family. Syed Waliullah's novel 'Lalsalu'(1949) shows that Khaleq was forced to divorce his wife. Because his wife can't be a mother. We know that the role of husband and wife is important for the birth of a child. In this case, only Amena Bibi has been blamed. As a result, Amena Bibi has to be a victim of gender discrimination just to be a woman here. Famous Bangladeshi novelist Selina Hossain has highlighted various aspects of gender inequality through her stories and novels. In the story 'Ijjat' she shows that age has changed, society has also changed but women still have to face gender discrimination. The story shows that Latif thinks of his wife Maleka only as a means of satisfying his sexual desires, not as a human being. And when this sexual desire is satisfied, he easily kills Maleka and floats her in the river. In the story 'Matijaner Meye', Matijan had to listen to harsh words from her mother-in-law because she had given birth to a daughter twice in a row. We all know Taslima Nasrin(1962-). She has been able to feel the inequality between men and women deeply. And because she opened her mouth against this discrimination, she had to be deported from his homeland

Conclusion : Actually, gender inequality is a social disorder. We think it is better to start the fight against this terrible disorder from the family. If we do not consider every child as a boy or a girl since born but only as a child or a human being, then perhaps we can win the war against this social disorder.



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