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# **DEPICTING GENDERED ASPECTS OF PANDEMIC IN INDIA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The particular article outlines the gender inequality faced by the women specifically in this COVID-19 Pandemic. Undoubtedly the measures like home quarantine or home isolation, work from home helped in combating COVID -19 but drastically increased the risk of rampant domestic violence, gendered division of labor at home & unwanted pregnancies. In this particular article, it has been tried to bring forth the actuality of two genders behind the closed corridors, behind the café curtains and closed casements of apartments. Nevertheless our constitution has always been the protector which always establish gender justice and gender equality through some blessing fundamental rights like article 14, article 15 , article 16 or article 18 and through some acts and legislations like The Protection Of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, Section 498(A) of IPC. Our societal patriarchal mindset on gender roles and gendered division of labor is still prevailing. This article elucidates different perspectives of gender inequality which jumped up in this pandemic.

## **I. INTRODUCTION: A brief analysis of gender**

The word '**Gender**' can be seen to be used interchangeably with the word '**sex**'. A layman usually does not see these two words as differently. On the other hand, **Gender is a social concept- A concept which is socially constructed**. A person's sex is determined by his or her birth or biology, does not always corresponding gender. Therefore the terms sex and gender are not interchangeable. India is a country where Masculine, Feminine and Third gender are recognized as living gender. Since, Gender is a socially constructed term it is nowhere defined in our Indian Constitution explicitly. Judges Interpret the case laws under the Umbrella of **Article 14,15,16,17 and 18 of Indian Constitution when equality is questioned**.

The almighty of Hindu mythology "**Mahadev**" who in the form of "**Ardhnareshwar**" gives us message that in every man there is existence of woman. According to psychology masculinity carries anger, ego, self -conceit in its darker side. But in some men we find soft emotion, caring attitude which are the virtue of femininity. These virtues make them great, as **Mahatma Gandhi was the best example of the body in which all these virtues were embodied**. While some women are insensitive, egoistic having these signs of masculinity.

Like men and women Third gender has also been recognized as Kinner in our Vedas and been treated equally. Example- Brihannala in Mahabharata. They have not been differentiated by the nature. They have been treated same as men, women, or any creature having life. Nature treats everyone equal. **It is society which makes differences**.

Since, this socially constructed society is devaluing the existence of women, How can the society forget the fact that **women are the mother who 1<sup>st</sup> feed the child**, when we are kid we are wholly dependent on our mother for food. At that time even our father can not feed us.

## **II. Women are the one who shape any human**

Now, what about this sudden covid 19? Is it sudden or nature had informed us earlier through texts? Factually we know that we experience a nature tragedy after every 100 years like once human have faced the terror of plague. when god gives us punishment he treats every caste, every nation, every color, every gender as one. Like in this covid 19 every caste, class or sex were affected.

A huge majority of about 83 % of the frontline workers are female nurses who have congruously and accordantly been working and putting their lives at risk.<sup>1</sup>

So, why in our society even in pandemic women suffered the most?

Although women came up with new start-ups, truly depicting painting or writings then also they are ill- treated here.

MYGOV in collaboration with UN women conducted the **COVID-19 Shri Shakti Challenge** to involve women-led start-ups to develop innovative solutions to fight against coronavirus. **Top 3 entries** were selected as winners, in the view of high quality of solutions presented, **3 additional entries** were selected as ‘ **Promising Solutions**’.<sup>2</sup>

### III. Gendered implication of pandemic

Undoubtedly this pandemic hit every gender very hard. People lost their belongings, their livelihood, their mental peace, their physical strength and many more in the tragic of covid 19. But the burning issue this pandemic itself created that did this suffering affect every gender equally? Was the pandemic gender biased? Which gender suffered the most?

Answer is there is huge gap in sufferings of different genders. Women are the one who faced it at extreme level with mental harassment, domestic violence, torture withholding pain. Women are being oppressed in multilayered i.e., it is not a particular caste or class of women who faced the tragic suppression.

### IV. Gendered aspects of pandemic in a Historical Perspective

“Gendered aspects of pandemic in a Historical perspective”. With the example of painting of Yashodhara and Mahatma Buddha we can imagine about what major contribution could have of her on that boy **Rahul to become mahatma Buddha**. We must admit the fact that “**women need to be decoded**”. Women of every class be it elite class, be it middle class or lower class have always faced hardships. It seems there have been a conspiracy theory and victimization

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<sup>1</sup>Akanksha Khullar, “ Women in India come together to fight COVID-19” ( May 29, 2021)

<https://thediplomat.com/2021/05/women-in-india-come-together-to-fight-covid-19> retrieved on 10-6-21

<sup>2</sup> ET Government, 6 Women led Start -ups win COVID-19 Shri Shakti Challenge of MyGov, UN Women, November 04, 2020, 18:30 IST

<https://government.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/technology/6-women-led-startups-win-covid-19-shri-shakti-challenge-organized-by-mygov-in-collaboration-with-un-women/79042990> retrieved on 10-06-21

of women along with witch hunting and all women been betrayed by their slaves. Earlier also women were used to be personified and tortured for getting rid of the evil- effect.

How Sheetala Mata being worshipped from era in India Hindu Mythology gives the message of cleanliness while she is worshipped during small pox. She is also a woman.

It is really a harsh truth that it becomes always easy to declare a woman a ghost or an evil. At this time also there was a rumor or fact from some remote areas talked about superstition of **Corona Mai**.

From the history very few people are acquainted with an exceptionally great personality who is rarely remembered “**Savitribai Phule**”. Who died for the sake of humanity. In this tough situation also we must be aware with the great work of Mahbubnagar district’s Superintendent of police **Rema Rajeshwari** who invented ‘**Mobile Safety**’ vehicle for the help of women who are victim of domestic violence.<sup>3</sup>

## V. Gendered aspect of pandemic in a sociological Perspective

**Gendered aspect of pandemic in a sociological perspective** can be tilted towards craving out the suppressed feminine class in the patriarchal society. how covid is unfolded? Whom and how did it affect?

The stereotyping labelling of patriarchal society have labelled the women as a means of hunting. In the early period it was very prevalent. But now since we have **power game** like “Qki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi” type dramas, we are growing. But still society is clinically, experimentally biased towards women. One other reason for this prejudice and shackles of women are women only because they are the perpetrators as well.

It is estimated that in every field to achieve equality as men, women have to work till 250 years. This is a huge inequality, disparity to be eradicated. This inequality gap increased the size in covid. Be it socio-economic or digital divide women have always faced.

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<sup>3</sup> Amrita Kohli, ‘Hats off,’ say netizens about cop who set up ‘Mobile Safety’ to help domestic violence victims, Hindustan Times, New Delhi, 07 Aug, 2020 11:03 PM IST  
<https://www.hindustantimes.com/it-s-viral/hats-off-say-netizens-about-cop-who-set-up-mobile-safety-to-help-domestic-violence-victims/story-c89VKJwOEI2yuEklgS3WO.html> retrieved on 10-6-21

## VI. Gendered aspect of Pandemic in Educational & Economical perspective

**Gendered aspect of Pandemic in Educational perspective** can be focused on how the impact of covid 19 effected so badly the adolescent girls or female child of the society. From the media we came to know that earlier one of the French newspaper decoded this pandemic as Masculine disease which resulted into aggression and unacceptance and later it was needed to be changed as female. It shows sex biasness.

Though some good works of government has stopped child marriage, female infanticide but still this pandemic reversed the situation again. It created the situation where mostly “**digital disparity**” affected the education of young girls which resulted in full stop to their studies. During online classes they are either busy in household work or having no access to internet device or connectivity. In news also we recently came to know how a girl committed suicide because her parents could not afford money for buying digital device needed. It is pathetic.

It is not a recession rather a secession. It actually increased the working hour of wo men from 6 to 12 hours. It undoubtedly affected their mental and physical health. This pandemic proved disastrous to women enduring domestic violence at home.

Women apart from enduring and withholding physical and mental trauma lost the future opportunity of their livelihood. As compared to men, women mostly lost their job, their identity, their dignity this pandemic. As per the new working paper women were likely to lose jobs 7 times more than men during the National lockdown.<sup>4</sup>

## VII. Gendered division of labour at home, Did it change during COVID-19 lockdown?

The division of work in every section is very much gender biased be it at work place or home, People think that the masculine gender are made for outside work only while feminine for specifically household work though they can contribute in earning income through outside jobs too but they are assigned for household work from the very beginning. The expected role determined by an individual’s sex and the associated attitudes, behaviors, norms, and values is termed as **Gender Role**<sup>5</sup>. As soon as this pandemic occurred the situation changed drastically

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<sup>4</sup> Priyanka Kakodkar, 'Women 11 times more likely to not work after Covid job loss', Times of India, 27 Feb, 11:29 IST  
<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/women-11-times-more-likely-to-not-work-after-covid-job-loss/articleshow/81233013.cms>

<sup>5</sup> Definition of Gender Role

and been worst as compared to earlier. It created the situation where **digital divide** or **digital disparity** affected the education of young girls. From many of the resources we observed it that in a family of 2-3 children if there is only 1 or 2 digital device present in house then the girl child was the one who had to suffer. we exhaustively saw the impact of COVID-19 in gendered division of labour at home. Their working hour increased multiple times. Be it preparing food, be it cleaning, preparing kadha and enduring the frustrations of their husband they actually been these agonies. With the onset of covid-19 pandemic, Pregnancy and childbirth are taking place in unusual circumstances where in lieu of Pre- Natal Care at home they are loaded with tons of work pressure and how can we forget the scenario which showed the limpidity of Pre Natal care of women while during migration thousands of pregnant women travelled a long journey with bags loaded on their head and lifting child on their shoulders arranging food for their family member.

## CONCLUSION

This article has tried to depict the true picture of long expedition of fight of Gender justice or gender equality. This pandemic showed the reality of gender roles and gendered division of labour. We need to bring change in our perspective 1<sup>st</sup> then only we can break the sickle of stereotype prejudice established through the conservative or orthodox societal pressure.

***“Culture of the mind must be subservient to the heart” -Mahatma Gandhi***