

The [Im]Practicality of Religion and the Gender [In]Equality: A logical Analysis

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Abstract

Ever since human beings learn to live in the company of his fellow human beings, for survival various codes of conduct start coming into being to make the survival balanced and purposeful. Gender and Religion are also the two different phenomena that happened to the society for strengthening the inter-connection between human beings to live together in a balanced way. Both gender as well as religion is the powerful forces that determine the basic nature of the society. But point is, how we can sure that it is working in its true spirit. Among all the institutions, Religion has its own importance because it tries to bridge the gap between physical and the transcendental and if we successfully bridge this gap, then there must be an equality of treatment. Religion has its basis in transcendental sphere where eternity survives, where concept of god, soul and life after death is discussed in detailed manners. If religion is practiced in its true sense than there is no problem of inequality on the part of human being. Therefore, in the eyes of religion physical existence has its ground in the metaphysical one. As religion has its base in the metaphysical aspects of the reality and at that level everything is equal and no point of any discrimination. But at the phenomenal level scenario is different. Natural inequality in the terms of biological or emotional level is undeniable but moral inequality on the part of human being is debatable. The focus of the present paper is on religion as a metaphysical principle of equality in the phenomenal world. Impracticality of any institution and Inequality of any kind goes hand in hand.

Keywords: Equality, Inequality, Religion, Women, Gender, Self-Awareness, Institution

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Introduction

The primary goal of mankind is to achieve the excellence in all walks of life, just to make the existence meaningful. Excellence in anything can be achieved only when it is practiced in right manner and practice is the only parameter for passing a judgment, to reach at the truth in a pragmatic world. We cannot talk about the things which we do not practice in true sense. But it becomes absolutely necessary to talk about things if they are existentially important for the collective well-being of the mankind. Society being the web of social relationships governs by various institutions as well as principles is constantly progressing towards the better world. This progress towards the balanced world gets obstructed if the institution on which society depends is defective one. These defective principles as well as institutions will end up in creating various kinds of discrimination and differences among the mankind, which hinders the development of the individual as well as society at large.

The unequal treatment with women by the man in the different walk of life is termed as the case of gender inequality. This problem is not new to us, it exists since mankind learn to live in the company of others. But point is what makes this behaviour of unequal treatment came into being. As human beings play different role in different walk of life which is inculcated by different institutions i.e. political, social, cultural, economic, psychological as well as moral, different kind of cases of unequal treatment based on gender emerged. The very nature of institution determines the impact of unequal treatment on a particular gender.

The importance of institutions in studying the problem of gender inequality is undeniable. Among the numbers of institutions, that act as the guiding forces to human conduct, the most important and the practical one is political, social and religious institutions. At the phenomenal level, all these institutions are known as the binding forces that unite the peoples but if we look at them at deeper level, what we call noumenal, scenario is different. Political and social institutions are the phenomenal institutions; they don't have the belief in the metaphysical aspect of the existence. So, all the social and political norms as well as principles are also determined by keeping in mind the phenomenal aspect of existence only. At the phenomenal level there is difference at the gender level which is undeniable, so is the case with these institutions. So, if we look at these institutions, they are not the binding forces rather they act as the dividing forces. Mankind is one, but if we reflect, there is division on the name of religion, region, politics, nationality, caste, color, creed, language as well as gender. All these kind of division in the mankind has its ground in the institutions. Except religion, all other institutions are phenomenal in nature. But religion as being practiced is a phenomenal institution, actually has its ground in the noumenal i.e. Metaphysical. Meanwhile, now the change is start coming into the human conscience to rectify the cause of non-practice of institutional code of conduct and defective norms set by the different institutions. Any improvement in the equality of treatment related to gender is possible only when there are balanced institutions as well as norms and it is possible only when man is willing to learn. To learn here means, to learn the things as it is, not as it appears or as it is projected to us.

Both religion and gender have powerful impact on the society as an institution. Gender is something very common to the society. The division set on the basis of gender is root cause of the problem of inequality with women. Biological difference is natural phenomena but the gender wise distinction is social in nature and it poses a serious threat to the social integration of the society, without which a balanced world is unimaginable. The kind of chaos that we perceived in the arena of gender wise distinction is not only influenced by social phenomena rather it is also affected by religion, political as well as other factors. To understand this problem of gender inequality in real sense, it is necessary to understand all these institutions and their inter-link between them to make the society a better place to live. But I limit my point of analysis to religion only and focus is on to study the impact of religion on the problem of gender inequality.

Religion is a powerful institution; the main cause of the major ideological split in the world population is this institution alone. The function of any institution is to work as an integrating force, and religion is top on this list. Religion split the world population into parts but it also works as an integrating force to keep unite the parts (follower of one religion). The integrating power in any institution is confined in its norms and principle, which is the very practical part of an individual's day to day life. Like other institutions, religions too have two aspects, phenomenal as well as noumenal. Phenomenal aspects of religion are composed of that part which we practiced in our day to day life, where there are different religious norms are set by the followers according to their own conveniences. This is the only reason in one religion we often find many variations with respect to the difference in space and time. So, by name, there may be one religion but in its practical sense, there are different approaches to that one exists. This is the story of almost all the religions of the world.

The influence of the religion in day to day life is undeniable, a fundamental part of life is guided by religion, from the birth to death and religion has its own value. The influence of religion is seen in different aspects of life, from customs, culture to various ritualistic practices. These different aspects of religion shaped the life of an individual and mankind at large. Here comes the problem of unequal treatment on the part of women, because the number of discriminatory practices that is practiced in our society is inculcated by organized religion. Along with the practices of discrimination, male exponent always does their best to justify discriminatory practices with women by giving reference to different religious literature as well as previous events, which may also be modified by the male members with the passage of time. The main point to focus on is to enquire about the different religious practices and changes that come with over time, this helps us to understand the nature of the problem of gender inequality as well as assist us to provide a solution to this problem.

In everyday life, everything with which human beings' deals is phenomenal, and the fundamental characteristics of the phenomenal aspects is, it is in transition, constantly changing: either upgrading or degrading. This constant change has a strong impact on human conduct, and all the institutions that work as guiding force to human conduct actually determine our behaviour. The unequal treatment by the human beings with one another is the outcome of the conditioning set by institutions. But if we focus on religion as institution practiced at the phenomenal level, it is discovered that objective religious principles have subjective value. It is the subjective dimensions that become the chief cause of defective practices in religious as well as other institutions. And defective religious practices lead to gender-based discrimination. In today world, almost all religions practiced so many practices where gender-based discrimination is considered as sacred, but same practices if analyzed at the rational or scientific level, failed miserably.

So, when we look at gender based unequal treatment in the context of religion. It is found that religion if practiced in its true sense, at least there is no unequal treatment on the part of religion. The question that arises here is what religion is in its true sense, the point that we need to understand here is another aspect of religion: a pure metaphysical aspect; where religion is accepted as, as it is, not as it appears. As appears, here simply means the way it is practiced in the (phenomenal) world.

The concept of gender has nothing to do with metaphysical aspect instead gender is socially constructed concept and so is the gender-based inequality. In Metaphysical dimension social constructed values has no importance, because anything that is constantly changing has no meaning and no reality. So in metaphysical dimension only those things are considered as real, which lays beyond the realm of change i.e. something which is eternal and religion in its true sense is also a technique to understand the metaphysical aspect of absolute reality and problem with phenomenal dimension of reality is people are so used to adjust things with their circumstances, which sometimes also lead to cases of gender inequality. But if religion is understood in its true essence i.e. metaphysical dimension, where things are scrutinized on the basis of principle of reality, results are quite different. Because if we look at an individual from the metaphysical point of view, only soul or consciousness is considered as real in true essence and neither soul nor consciousness has any gender. We are conditioned to such extent that we lack such kind of knowledge; that gives birth to so much problems. Problem of gender-based inequality is one of them, and if we look at it philosophically it is crystal clear that sex is biological and gender is social constructed concept, neither soul nor consciousness has any gender. So if we look at an individual from the metaphysical points of view we are just human irrespective of different genders. The points here need to be focus on is, this is the case with every aspect of existence where people are discriminated on the basis of caste, color, creed, language, race, etc.

Conclusion

It is the non-practice of norms and principles set by the institutions that give rise to unequal treatment. Religion unlike other institutions exposed human beings to deep knowledge, where human beings get the chance to know; who they really are? And this enlightening experience brings a great deal of wisdom. But the need of the hour is to revolutionize the traditional religious practices by exposing them to rationality. The same kind of approach was seen in medieval philosophy, where scholastic thinkers do their best to judge even faith and beliefs on rational grounds. Anything which is justified rationally is worth doing. It can be said that, if religion is practiced in its metaphysical sense, there will be very few cases of gender inequality because at the metaphysical level we are soul or consciousness and at that level there is no point of discrimination of any kind. So, the case of impracticality of religion and gender inequality and practicality of religion and gender equality goes hands in hands. The problem is on the part of human understanding as well as conduct and it not lies in the institutions as much as we thought. Clarity in understanding comes with the knowledge of self (deep awareness of oneself) and it also helps to upgrade the human conduct in the light of morality. So, the knowledge of religious concepts brings moral reform in one conduct and this also helps to remove the gender-based discriminations from the society.

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