Dealing with the Dilemma: Freedom, Family and Social Values

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Abstract: *Women in the present political and social turmoil had become a 'soft target' from all the corners in this patriarchal society. Being a democratic country, women are subjected to abuse in many forms such as physical, social and emotional. From past few years the violence against women had increased great folds and media too had propagated 'this very issue' in huge cry. In the recent times with the political unrest in the universities had readily questioned the women and their freedom. This paper tries to understand the views of the young adolescents in the school settings in relation to the 'freedom of girls'. Being qualitative in nature, this research study had 'dug' on the adolescent thinking of both boys and girls to understand their perception regarding girls in relation to family and society. The result reveals that both boys and girls are much influenced by the social norms of the society which had been strengthen by the recent incidents in their surroundings and country.*

Key Words: *Social, Freedom, Women, Family, discrimination.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

India being a Patriarchal society had always subdued the position of women. Women are being the prestige of the family. Even after more than six decades of independence the plight of women is miserable. Now considering the present national scenario where even the universities considered to be the hub of education are not really safe for students such incidences had probed questions in many ways such as regarding the spaces and safety. Pondering towards the notion of the 'Public spaces' in general. Now these are those spaces where all citizens – irrespective of gender, class, sexuality, disability or any other social identity – have the right to access. Here, public space embraces all those spaces accessed by all women. These include streets (neighbourhood streets, lanes, streets leading to the main roads), modes of public transport (city buses, intercity coaches, trains, metros, auto-rickshaws, rickshaws) and sites like bus stops and market streets (bazaars, shopping malls) (Bhattacharyya, 2015,p. 1343). "Henri Lefebvre illustrated the explicit Marxist analogy of production of space to testify to the manner in which a particular space is created, coded and used through the processes of social, political and everyday practices (Lefebvre [1992] 2004). According to Lefebvre ([1974] 1991, [1992] 2004), social space is a by-product of social practices. He analysed the production of space through three key routes: first, he worked with the Marxist notion of dialectic; second, he (re)worked on Marxist political economy to experiment the everyday life of home and city; and, third, he discussed the sociology of rural and urban. In doing so, he argued that there are three ways to understand social space: as perceived, conceived and lived. He related his notion of space to three other moments: spatial practices, which is not only subjective but embraces concrete, material and physical space; representations of space, conceived commonly by planners, scientists and urbanists and embodies the space of abstract plans and mental map. Lefebvre ([1974] 1991) claimed that both the spaces be linked together through dialectical relation and be termed as spaces of representation. Spaces of representation address the ways through which one can reconcile mental space and real space: a space, tangent upon the physical and social spheres of an individual or a group of people, and through which social relations are reproduced" (taken from Battaccharya, 2015. p. 1344)

Reiterating the recent incidences in the India, whether it's be Nirbhaya case (2012)or University of Delhi (2017) the incidences of women assault are still prevailing. Taking the intersection of the freedom, space, women everything is so closed in real sense. The most common form of harassment faced by women in public spaces is locally known as 'eve teasing', which manifests itself in lewd comments on the physical beauty of women or the way they dress, whistling, staring, stalking, singing songs or even some form of physical assaults such as groping, fondling and pinching (Bhattacharyya 2009; Ramasubramanian and Oliver 2003).

 Indian patriarchal society 'tries' to situate women in private space. Culturally the private spaces are house and household chores and so on. Arguably, social constructions of gender, socially expected roles, identities, attributes and social structures that largely impose these roles drive women to a marginalised position (Bhattaccharya 2009). Coming to the women education and their movement Kingdon and Unni (2001) and P. Duraiswamy (2000) in their study were able to analyze and estimated the actual return in terms of education in relation to men and women. They confirmed the return for men is more compared to women. In relation to the demarcation of the activities Bennett (1992, p.1) had clearly explained the position of the women. In this the author had concluded that the activites which earn livelihood and predominantly include economic and political power are male dominated and this in turn affects the employment of women. Moreover in turn influences weather family will allow the girls to go out for the school or

work. The present study tries to understand the intersection between the notion of freedom, social values and family in relation to girls. The student participating in the study resides in the slum. "United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) recently reported that the world's population is shifting to its cities. India is no exception. Throughout the country, an creasing number of migrants are leaving agricultural lifestyles in search of economic and educational opportunities, often relocating to non-notified slums. Despite the fact that many families move in search of better schools, in reality, children living in non-notified slums lack access to high-quality early childhood educational opportunities, a situation that can disadvantage them throughout their lives." (K & Subramaniana, 2015).

2. DEFINING THE PROBLEM FOR THE PRESENT RESEARCH:

To understand the problem it becomes imperative to define it, and then move beyond definition. Freedom is a notion which existed for men in the past decades but now it is for women too. For the present research the freedom is overall decision making ability for the future by the girl. It can be movement, education, marriage, employment, behaviour and so on. The research questions which guided the whole process were:
- What do you understand by the freedom of girls?
- Is it necessary for girls to take permission from parents for every work?
- Do you take permission for every work you do?

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:
Data Collected from Class VIII Students of a private school:

S.NO	Section	Total Number of Students in class	Data Collected from Students
1.	Boys	30	21
2.	Girls	20	16
	Total	50	37

4. BACKGROUND:

School is a private school. The school follows State Board syllabus. The School is situated in the vicinity of the Slum. This slum had completed almost seven decades of its existence. The students enrolled in the school are mostly coming from the slums. Also, most of the students belong to SC and ST category. The students in class VIII are mostly entering their adolescent period of their life. This period is very crucial in their identity formation and accepting the notions of society. The researcher tried to grapple the views in relation to the 'girls freedom'. How the students observe girls freedom in the society and how they view their own freedom in relation to the other gender is being tried to dug out.

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:

Most of the boys almost 70% of boys and 100% of girls are of the opinion that the girl's freedom is equivalent to boy's freedom. There should be no discrimination among boys and girls in relation to their movement and decision making power but few boys especially wants them (girls) to have a limited movement from the house. The students responded majorly in relation to 'going out' of the house to meet friends. Few students strongly believe that in the present times the eve teasing, molestation, and even sexual harassment are the reasons that makes the girls 'suited' better inside the house. If they go out and something happens such as rape etc, then the family will stop the education of the girls and force her to 'marry' at this younger age. This is in accordance of the research work conducted by Gupta, 2005). In her study she states that "Violence in the public sphere takes the form of sexual harassment; verbal and physical abuse in the street and workplace; stalking; criminality around abduction, kidnapping, organ removal, infant sex change of unwanted girls; throwing acid on women's faces and bodies; inappropriate touching; misogynist killings such as mutilation murder, rape murder, and rape and battery which escalates into murder. Sex trafficking takes place in the public domain too, and is a billion dollar industry in India that is aided and abetted by entrenched attitudes of patriarchy, gender discrimination, and a lax legal system" (Gupta, 2005)

Permission from Parents from every Work

89% of boys were of the opinion that girls should do every work after taking permission from their parents. The idea behind this was as the parents are our elders so they can guide girls in a better way. They should always follow and do according to their parents will. Four students were of the opinion that girls are at risk in the present society. Almost 50% are against asking any permission but most striking is that 50% of them are in favour of that girls should take permission. Those girls who are in favour of taking permission are having the opinion that its the matter of values and family bonding. It's not that they are against the freedom of girls but they believe that since we live in the society where the reputation of the girls and their parents that matter. The 'handcuffs' of society and social norms had affected the psyhe of the children.

Taking permission for every work you do

Almost all the boys accepted that **they do not take any type** of permission from the parents or family when they do small and general work. Some boys inform about where are they going but it is not taking permission. Almost all the girls accepted that **they always take permission** before they do any type of the work. Girls consider that being a girl it is their responsibility not to hurt their parent sentiments in any form. Whereas some questioned their thinking "Why only girls had to take permission?" If they are not allowed then this is straight away discrimination. Boys proclaim that they know the outside world and male gender better than girls. But here the girls questioned that if the society and family do not allow girls to go out" then how the girls will know about the world which exists outside the four walls?"

Overall Analysis and Understanding
The response of both boys and girls in relation to the Girls Freedom are mostly influenced by the familial 'good girl' image. But few girls had raised their voices about the discrimination and sabotage on the name of the family and soci'ety. The responses given by the boys were given in line with the present day 'conditions'. The main concern of the boys were that if 'something happens to a girl' then her education will be stopped.

6. CONCLUSION:
The present day 'offers' girls with the baggage of the family, social values and the responsibility. So where is the point of equality when even the 'movement' of the girls are restricted on the name of safety and securities?

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