

Sex Discrimination and Nursing Profession

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NOWHERE else in the history of India there exists such a discrimination on the basis of sex as it is existing in the Nursing profession, the so called noblest profession where Florence Nightingale had been the symbol of ailing humanity. At the work place, she is under subjugation and pressure threats of the administrative personell, doctors, paramedicals, and antisocial elements.

There is a definite social bias against this profession and upto recently social stigma had been there on this profession. What a dilemma? On one side, this profession is given the name of the noblest profession and on the other hand it is looked down upon by the society at large. Our aim here is not to go into the historical reasons of the present bias against Nursing profession but to pinpoint the most glaring bias which is also existing even today against this profession.

When a Nursing student is admitted in the Nursing Course, she is to furnish a certificate that she is unmarried. She is supposed to remain unmarried for 3½ years during the completion of this course.

This condition is given on the plea that they should not bear children during the course and it will interfere with their studies.

I do not think that anywhere in India this type of bar is there for admissions to such courses. Moreover, wherever the institutions for male Nursing course are there, this bar does not exist. This amounts to a clear cut sex-discrimination in free India after 39 years of independence and so much hue and cry for equal rights to womanhood in India.

The general impression of the study conducted at the time of admission reveals the fact that:

(1) Many well intended and genuine candidates are not able to apply for this profession because of this bar.

(2) There are many girls who are not pulling on well with their marriages, they want to be independent earning hands by joining this profession. But the in-laws harass them by not giving a legal divorce without which they cannot join the course.

(3) Even if some of the candidates join by furnishing certificates from Sarpanches, etc, that they have separated themselves from their husbands, they are under continuous threat from them that this fact will be exposed to the authorities if they do not bow down to their wishes.

(4) Some of the girls are engaged before they are admitted, and a span of 3½ years' long wait for

marriage brings in social and psychological tension in them. Many times when their would be husbands come to meet them, they have to tell lies about their relationship before the authorities and fellow colleagues. This leads to personality changes in these candidates.

(5) Under the prevailing conditions, a girl at the age of 17, in a free atmosphere with so many tensions, in her mind, is bound to develop deviations for which only she is held responsible and looked down upon.

(6) Continuously throughout the 3½ years' training course, she is not allowed to marry and bear the children. This is a clear case of basic fundamental right of a woman, that of maternity, being denied.

Remedy for this Discrimination

(1) To fight for right of equality for women, the struggle is a long drawn one and the nurses also will have to become the part of the broader movement which is struggling for the equal rights for women and also for the change of this existing system in which is the basic cause of this injustice.

(2) Various nurses' organisations will have to raise the consciousness of the nurses to fight out against this discrimination taking the support of the public also.

(3) This discrimination should also be fought constitutionally in the court of law by various organisations of nurses or the women's organisations which are fighting for the cause of emancipation of women in the country.

To conclude, the reasons for exploitation of women are as follows:

(1) Historically, the woman has been thought to have an inferior status in the society.

(2) Concept of women as a commodity in present-day society.

(3) Display of woman as a consumer item by the media, radio, newspaper, T.V, films and natakas etc.

(4) Equal rights are limited to the Constitution only. Practically the concept of equal status does not exist.

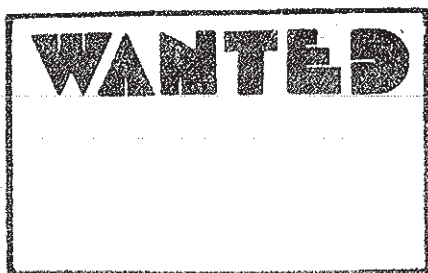
(5) There is no economic independence for woman.

(6) The Nursing profession historically started in the form of Dais. These women were coming from socially oppressed classes. The profession could not have an equal status as that of other medical personell.

(7) Problems of workplace, overwork, bureancra-

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Sex Discrimination

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tization, policy of carrot and stick, value system of the other team members, pay scales of the nurses, improper job description.

(8) The Nursing education is bureaucratic mystified, and institutionalised.

All round fight at various levels has to be started simultaneously as follows:

(1) Fight against the defective system which is the root cause of the exploitative nature for woman.

(2) Fight against the working place problems.

(3) Fight at the constitutional level against discrimination.

(4) Fight for the better economic status and independence of the Nursing profession.



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