

Essay:- The Intersection of Race and Gender: How Women of Color Experience Double Discrimination

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The Intersection of Race and Gender: How Women of Color Experience Double Discrimination

The intersection of race and color has doubly marginalized women of color. They face discrimination even within the women community. Women, in general, are sidelined at home and around the world. To worsen the situation, women of color undergo double the bias. These women, who normally comprise the women from Africa and South Asia, experience undue discrimination. They are degraded in marriage context in traditional areas. They also bear the brunt of the hypocrisy of the beauty industry, workplace bias and negligence in foreign lands. The fashion and film industries leave no stone unturned to further degrade the already-marginalized sector. Despite the degradation, there is a silver lining. The discrimination against race and gender is being discouraged with time. However, the disparity in intra- and inter-gender context persists. To eliminate the gap, or at least reduce it, actions such as awareness campaigns,

changing beauty trends and inclusive legislature must be taken. The pace of a discrimination-free world must increase.

The concept of intersectionality came into limelight long after the struggle for gender equality began. This happened when people came to the realization that not all women face the same form of negligence. Colored women in particular experience more discrimination than white women. This coalescence of gender and race is, thus, termed as intersectionality. Darker women face more hurdles in the society, at workplace and around the world. They are marginalized not only by the patriarchal segments but also, within women community, by the whiter women.

Before proceeding to the discrimination faced by colored women, following two paragraphs will discuss the bias faced by women in general.

Firstly, all women, irrespective of

their caste and race are a victim of neglect and abuse in one way or another. The discrimination is most visible at home. Such claims are evidenced by the report by UNICEF which revealed that 370 million girls before the age of 18 endured rape. Another report by UN said that a rape takes place every two minutes in Pakistan. These appalling figures show only one side of a multifaceted issue. Women face discrimination in workplaces, social interactions and even in politics.

Secondly, misogyny is rampant around the world. Women are disliked only because of their gender. They are downgraded, neglected, and even abused because they are women. The 2023 Femicide report by UN sheds light on this dark scenario. In that year, 25,000 women were killed internationally, mostly by their spouses or family members. The report also supported the act of honour killing. Women are held responsible for the honour of

a family in tribal areas. Any dent to the honour of women's family is perceived to be the onus of that woman causing the family to harm her. Such unwelcomed contempt for women solely for their gender is prevalent around the world.

Proceeding to the dual discrimination of women, additionally because of their race, the already-marginalized segment faces further derogation. The women of color are easy to distinguish, both due to their origin and appearance.

Originally, they belong to areas like Africa, South Asia and South-east Asia.

people of these areas are generally considered colored. Apparently, they have a skin tone of varying shades. Those of Africa are black, the ones in South Asia are brown and people of East and South-east are of yellow skin shades. As a matter of fact, all the colors excepting the Anglo-caucasian white are considered colored. Thus, the women of color are distinguished

based on their origin and appearance.

Furthermore, symbolism surrounding dark women exacerbate the discrimination they face. In South Asian countries, a concept of a black female cat (Kali billi) is highly degraded. It says that if a female black cat passes across one's intended path, it emulates bad luck.

These axioms may seem innocent and harmless on nominal value. They are very impactful on the minds of people.

Why does a black female cat necessarily mean bad luck? Why can it not be any cat for that matter? Such symbolism and analogy highlight a higher concerning issue: The disregard for black color and female sex.

Discrimination of an animal based on its color and gender reflect the mindset of people regarding colored women.

In the same vein, girls and women with a society, even of the same race, face discrimination based on their color. People search for white brides

in nuptial matters. It is common to find an advertisement in a newspaper enumerating the qualities of a prospective bride and one of the required 'qualities' is being fair. Similarly, the requirement is glorified in movies as well. A Bollywood movie that goes by the name 'Ek Vivah Aisa Bhi' depicts the obsession of Indians (also South Asians) with white brides where the fairer cousin is always chosen over the darker one. This is one reason that girls who hit puberty resort to whitening treatments to be eligible for marriage.

Additionally, the cosmetic industry jumps in the pool of this malice. Whitening creams, serums and other treatments are a thriving business. These cosmetics, aimed at 'whitewashing' women, come at the cost of health hazards. They contain harmful chemicals such as mercury, a leading cause of skin cancer. Not surprisingly, these treatments sell faster than anything else. They are advertised openly and attract women

who are forced to believe that fair is beautiful. An advertisement by a famous cream brand shows a girl anxious about her job interview. Noticing her anxiety, ~~the~~ her friend recommends her a cream that would 'whiten' her in seven days. She follows the regime, becomes fair and lands up getting the job. These cosmetic company do not solve a problem. They create a problem by calling out dark women and lure them into buying them as a solution.

Women also face discrimination in workplaces and experience double the bias because of their color. Firstly, the most available jobs for girls are the pink collar jobs. Within that department, the fairer women are often preferred over the darker ones. Having the capability is often secondary to having the looks. Take, for instance, the job of air hostess. It is very unusual to

find a darker air hostess. Is it by chance? Very unlikely. In fact, fairer girls are considered more beautiful and, therefore, are chosen to be the 'face' of the airline.

Building on this, the woes of colored women in foreign lands, particularly the West are not new. Black women, even after the end of slavery, continue to face the drawbacks of a white supremacist society. Brown and yellow women neither face too much cordiality in those continents. The exclusivity of colored women is the talk of the day in countries of the West. France, whose vast majority is that of Black, is intermittently in the news about discrimination against the community. Trump's anti-immigrant stance substantiates the Western disregard for non-whites. This neglect, if aimed toward a whole community, doubles when it reaches the women.

Another factor to consider is the

discrimination against darker women in the film industry. Although this concept is rare in the West, it persists rampantly in Eastern industries. There is a demand for white women in movies. For instance, it is very rare to find a dark-colored actress in South Indian movies despite the fact that the people along the Malabar coast are darker in color. Similarly, many actresses go through treatments such as glutathione injections to 'whiten' themselves and increase their chances of getting a movie. Such mindsets show how women are not spared even within their own gender.

Albeit the discrimination that dually marginalises women of color, there is a silver lining. Women of color are accepted more than before. This is instance both in the West and East. The election of Kamala Harris as

The vice president of America, the second most powerful position in the world proved that women of color are crossing such barriers. Moreover, the winning of Manushi Chhillar, a brown Asian woman of the Miss Universe in 2017 is a fresh change in the global perspective of white being beautiful. Such steps, though slow, indicate the widened gap to shrink.

Nonetheless, AChm needs to be taken to speed up the pace of reducing this gap. Awareness campaigns are often arranged by the United Nations must be more common to normalize acceptance of women of any color and person of any gender. Moreover, the beauty industry needs to take action in changing its perception regarding beauty standards. Last but not least, policies at legislative levels must be implemented where racial and gender discrimination

must be criminalized. Constitutionally, these laws exist; practically, they do not. Thus, initiatives to minimize the racial and gender discrimination against women must be taken.

Conclusively, women do face discrimination at two levels: firstly, because of their gender, and then ^{they are} even more marginalized if they are of darker color. Such discrimination exists at household, societal and global levels. Women of color are often tagged as ugly, compelling them to resort to falsely-invented beauty standards. They face discrimination at workplaces, newly-settled areas and even in movies. However, a change in this practice is being observed around the world. Furthermore, actions need to be taken to increase the pace of this change. Discrimination must end against all races and no biases should be made for any gender. The equality of humanity should prevail.