

Regional Symposium –Northern Region On "Men and Boys for Gender Justice"

22ND-23RD SEPTEMBER, 2014 STATE ARCHIVES, MAHANAGAR EXT. LUCKNOW



ORGANIZED BY-



SAHAYOG

SAHAYOG, Lucknow

SUPPORTED BY-



Center for Health and Social Justice (CHSJ)
New Delhi

INTRODUCTION

SAHAYOG, Men Engage Global Alliance and MASVAW organized a Regional Symposium on "Men and Boys for Gender Justice" on 22nd-23rd September, 2014 in Rajkiya Abhilekhagar, Mahanagar Ext. Lucknow. This Regional Symposium was a contribution towards the Global Symposium which will be held from 10th-13th November, 2014 in New Delhi.

As a part of the Regional Symposium representatives of CSOs from five states (MP, UP, UK and Rajasthan) working with Men and Boys for Gender justice, representatives from the feminist groups, academicians, advocates, student union leaders, trade union, media activist, CBOs and other individuals were present.

OBJECTIVE AND BACKGROUND SETTING

By- Satish K. Singh, Centre for Health and Social Justice (CHSJ)-

In 2005 Men engage was formed to work with men & boys all over the world and make them responsible for gender justice, and how they can challenge the current trends of masculinity. The first symposium was organized in 2009 in Rio. Before the first symposium the work with men and boys was only limited to HIV/AIDS.

The *Nirbhaya* case (Delhi Gang Rape 16th December 2012) mobilized people to come together in New Delhi and the city which was type casted as the city of Rapist was identified as the city of Protesters. This was a reason Delhi was chosen to host the second Global Symposium on Men and Boys for Gender Justice and work with a comprehensive approach towards gender justice.

In Delhi around 1000 people are coming together to discuss on issues like men and health, men and violence etc and what are the potential opportunities to work with men and what are the potential challenges in working with men and boys.

To take the idea of working with men and boys around the country 6 regional symposiums are organized in different regions and the discussions of these regional symposiums will be taken to the global symposium so the voices from the ground can reach the world.

The Global Symposium team has gathered around 70 films on gender and masculinity and is organizing film festivals all over the country.

After the global symposium the discussions from it will again go back to the regions.



Figure 1 Satish kr. Singh sharing about the objective of the Regional Symposium

**MEN, MASCULINITY AND VIOLENCE & GENDER BASED DISCRIMINATION
(PLENARY SESSION-DAY 1)**

Chair- Subhash Mendhapurkar- Director, Sutra

Co-Chair- Prof. Roop Rekha Verma- Chief Functionary, Saajhi Duniya

Address by the Chair-

Working with men and working on masculinity are two different things. If we look at the current trends of masculinity these kinds of symposiums are very important. Today the new trend of masculinity is that the men obey their mother but not give any identification to their wives.

➤ **Custodial violence, military torture, violence by police, violence in riots; its impact on men and boys-
By Tulika Srivastava, South Asian Women's Fund (SAWF):**

When we talk about gender justice we should talk not only about men and boys but about all those living in a marginalized situation. Custodial violence and violence by police is a state subject and military violence is a centre subject. It is a problematic issue that when we talk about men and boys we somewhere negate the whole concept of feminism. It is difficult to see masculinity as a patriarchy concept because it has firm economic and political ties.

If one looks at the indicators of human rights and all the treaties India has signed we will not see the word men and boys but the word "All People" but still till 1990's all people referred only to men. After 1990's it was established that we cannot talk about human rights without mentioning woman.

It is important to look at gay, transgender and queer people and what are their linkages with the state. South Asian military cannot talk about any other gender identity and therefore the situation of other gender in the army is not talked about. The issue of men and boys being raped is still hidden.

Still in India torture is allowed and no law is challenging that. We need to look back to our history [feminist, militarization (1857)] and talk on men and boys and masculinity in reference to that.

➤ **Pressure of masculinity and patriarchy; how men/boys do violence on themselves-
By Satish K. Singh, CHSJ, New Delhi:**

Masculinity helps to learn and talk about relations between two men and masculinity and patriarchy are interrelated. Masculinity on outside looks very strong but at the same time it is very weak as it can be broken due to small things. All men don't have equal power, but all men desire power as he is born as a male. Those men who do not have access to power in outside world they show their power inside the house by committing acts of violence.

Men are afraid that if they are gender sensitive they will lose their masculinity and their place and the society. Men need to understand that if they can allow women to lead them in professional life then what the problem in accepting woman leadership in household is.

The whole movement of work with men and boys started by making men understand that they should support women empowerment but now the current situation requires men to understand that they need to protect themselves from these aggressive masculinities and women can take care of themselves.

➤ **Globalization, media and construction of masculinity-
By- Utkarsh Sinha, Media Activist:**

Globalization is a term used as the most important concept when we talk about development. But is this true? Is this globalization working equally for all? Is it benefitting the people living marginalized lives?

The whole web of globalization is spun on development but who is the actual beneficiary. Globalization is basically for the industrialist. The main focus in globalization is market and there the role of media comes in. 20 years ago media was mostly centered towards local issues. After globalization, when investment in media increased the role of patriarchy in media also increased. Today whether electronic news, paper or cinema media is only centered in selling news as products. The sensitive news only gets a negligible space that to with the mere objective of changing the taste and offers something different.

Today media has increased cultural struggles. Today when so called *dharma gurus* enter the cultural struggles they reinforce the cultural symbols.

He gave few examples from the electronic media which reinforces keeping women power in the bracket of masculinity (Title of the movie MARDANI and the ad of a telecom company where woman leadership by her husband is accepted in office but at home she has to cook).

Newspapers nowadays open women clubs and celebrate all the festivals that promote patriarchy. When everything is just to be sold then sensitivity has no place. Here the media needs to look into its role.

➤ **Men committing sexual violence against men/boys and issue of sexual orientation/identities and dignity-**



Figure 2 Jashodhara Dasgupta speaking on Men committing sexual violence against men and issue of sexual orientation and dignity

By- Jashodhara Dasgupta, SAHAYOG:

She started her speech by raising the question that what do we understand from gender justice? Do we only consider women being protected from men and violence as gender justice? Is gender only an issue concerning only men and women? Every individual has some masculine and some feminine traits. She quoted an incident few years ago when 4 men were abducted from the house by police without any warrant. These 4 men identified themselves as a member of a gay club. When this question was raised in front of the state no one else except feminist organizations came up to support the issue.

When there was a protest going on in Delhi against Article 377 of the Indian constitution it was good to see that not only feminist but different organizations and platforms working on different issues

came up to protest as now they understand that violation of anybody's human rights is violation of our rights.

She also raised the issue of Love Jihad and how the current political scenario will have its implications on Right to choice.

Responses from the Audience

- Capitalism was thought to end the gap between two sexes. But it glorified the set trends of masculinity. We do not catch the root cause. MASVAW was initiated and we all were a part of it but then as some financial support was withdrawn it fell off.
- Globalization is coming from westernization and we are saying that it is wrong but at the same time we are diverting from our culture when we promote transgender, so what exactly our stand.
- I work with youth on masculinity and have understood that change is possible. I agree at men need to protect themselves from masculinity (MASVAW youth).
- Our political female leaders do not have enough power. Their mentalities need to change as they are the leaders and people look up to them.

Responses from the Panelist

- Gender Justice is not a western thought it is an issue of human rights. Here globalization is referred completely as the issue of capitalism.
- When we refer to culture we are not referring to the Indian cultural norms we here are referring to the various give and take of cultural thoughts over the years.
- Masculinity should not be viewed only as in a male body, to run this institution of patriarchy the women are also involved

Address by the Co-Chair, Prof. Roop Rekha Verma, Sajhi Duniya:

When any system is wrapped in cultures then it directly affects the mentality. Women are taught that anger and power is an indicator of a perfect man. Men, women and transgender are themselves promoting gender discrimination so all of them need to come together and work, we cannot say that women should solve the issue of gender discrimination as they are the ones affected by it and similarly working only among men will not end gender discrimination.

When the concept of nation didn't exist then also the patriarchy worked whether we take the example of *jhashi ki rani* or *kaikai* – when women were needed they were allowed to go out of the house. But at the same time it was established that they were good wives and really beautiful. (Fulfilling the criteria of good women)



Figure 3 Prof. Roop Rekha Verma Co-Chairing the Panel discussion

It is rightly said that men do not need to protect women and women should not be dependent on men for protection. Women should also protect them from the traditional norms as we say that men should protect themselves from masculinity. Both men and women should work towards dissolving the set definitions of femininity and masculinity. Both of them should accept the definition of humanity.

The current definition of masculinity treats a man no less than an animal. Some features of masculinity were more active before globalization and some are much active now. It is surprising that why there is no campaign by men's group and that why men are not speaking on their degradation on the name of masculinity.

Both men and women are pressurized to succeed but the definition of success is different for both of them. Gender politics need to be unfolded and looked upon in detail.

REPRESENTATION OF MASCULINITY IN INDIAN CULTURE

(PARALLEL SESSION- DAY 1)

Chair- Arundhati Dhuru, NAPM

Co-Chair- Jashodhara Dasgupta, SAHAYOG

Four groups were divided to have discussions on the following issues-

Group-1: Modern media; advertisements, serials, films:

The group saw four advertisements (Fair and Lovely, Bournvita, Havels and Bharat Matrimony). Group felt that most of the advertisements, films promote stereotype definitions of masculinity and femininity and they have great impact on the viewers. The use of language is very patriarchal in all the ads.

Another issue with the current media is that it is controlled by capitalists and not by the media persons anymore therefore the sole objective of current media is to capture only that news which will attract the population and sell news as products.

The group felt that sensitization of media on gender issues is very important. Media persons should be updated on the recent developments in the field of gender studies and media's accountability should be ensured when taking up gender related issues.

Group-2: Traditional media; folk songs:

Giving examples from the different traditions and folklore like picture of Indian God Lord Vishnu lying down and Goddess Laxmi sitting at his feet, singing of specific songs on the birth of a male child, idioms and phrases glorifying masculinity etc., the group concluded that traditional media and folklore promotes gender stereotypes. The reasons behind these prevailing folklore and traditional media are our religious belief, cultural norms and our socialization process. Working with men and boys on the issue of gender equality is difficult because men are afraid that if they behave in a gender sensitive manner their position and role in the society will be questioned. Their families will not support them and they will become a laughing stalk for everybody.

Group acknowledged the fact that some men are sensitive on gender issues and these men should be approached first and sensitized. There is an urgent need to work with men and boys on the usage of abusive language. New stories and traditions based on gender equality needs to be written and publicized.



Figure 4 Group discussion on representation of masculinity in Indian Culture

Group-3: Home, Family and community (More inside the home):

Home is where socialization starts. Boys are brought up knowing that they have to earn, take the family name forward.

Boys have access to good education, better health services, and means of recreation. They are brought up as protectors of the family and society. The reason behind this is the patriarchal thinking, importance of male child to provide *Moksha* and many other religious activities which are result of the patriarchal thinking.

If men are challenging the set roles then they have to face criticism from the society. If men are soft spoken and do not fit into the set roles of masculinity their acceptance among the opposite gender decreases.

The group also felt that some men are selfish and knowingly practice gender unequal roles of masculinity as portrayal of masculinity prevents them to do household chores.

The group suggested that gender equality can only come when the society leaves behind masculinity and feminity and raises the question of humanity. There is an urgent need to work with men and boys. Men should play an active role in sharing the responsibilities and should recognize women as an equal citizen with equal rights. The youth should be sensitized and given the responsibility to work towards a gender equal society.

Group-4: Institutions, schools, colleges, work places etc. (More outside the home):

Prevalence of institutions like *Khap Panchayats* are promoting masculinity in India. Women are still given desk/soft jobs as they are still considered inefficient for tasks that require mobility. The CASH (Committee Against Sexual Harrasment) committees are still not established in majority of institutions. Books in our education system are written from a single gender perspective and other genders are assumed to be a part of it. Subjects like home science and dance are considered appropriate only for girls. Girls are encouraged to take up professions which involve less or no mobility and no late night working hours. India signed a treaty that by 2015 there will be education for all, no gender gaps and discrimination still the enrollment of girls in primary

schools has dropped. If at all the enrollment of girls is increasing in the government schools that are because families are sending their boys to good private schools and girls to not so good govt. schools.

The patriarchal environment at home and the complete absence of orientation of officials, teachers and managers on gender equality leads to a wide gender gap in the working of all our systems.

The group suggests that gender review of books is very important. Work needs to be done with the decision makers and policymakers to change their mind sets.

Address by the Chair (Arundhati Dhuru):

After the Delhi Gang Rape incident (Nirbhya) all men are coming up and saying they will respect women. Respect is not something that can be given and why do we need such incidents to happen before realizing that women should be respected. Even today when there are protests against article 377 of the Indian Penal code, only feminist organizations are standing up why not the men campaigns are standing up to protest against 377.

One needs to fight at the family level first and practice gender equality before fighting for others. The issues of communalism, land disputes, tribal issues should be fought for along with the issue of masculinity and gender. The men groups like MASVAW should also keep their stands clear on the establishment of a Men's Commission.

Address by the Co- Chair (Jashodhara Dasgupta):

The feminist campaigns till today carries the burden to work towards a gender equal society. The work on men and boys for gender justice should be seen within the boundaries of the feminist movements. The contributions of house wives got its recognition due to the feminist movements. The feminists have always come on streets to demand their rights and now if men and boys are coming up to work with this issue then men also need to come on the streets.

India is a land of *sufi* style of music which considers both masculine and feminine characteristics in an individual. So blaming the culture for unequal gender behavior is not justified.

If media is behaving like corporate and selling news then we can bring about a change in the media with our articles. Men are privileged in our societies so what men need to do is to leave some of the privileges. They have to leave the freedom they have, do household chores, work so women can roam around with their friends, do their jobs etc. men need to discuss how men can leave the privileges and work towards the gender justice.

Gender justice is not only about men and women; the third gender should not be left out when talking about gender justice.

**EXPERIENCES OF CHANGE AND STRUGGLE FROM THE GROUND
(Plenary Session- Day 2)**

Chair- Nishi Meherotra

Co Chair- Satish Kr. Singh, CHSJ

➤ **Experiences from MASVAW network Uttar Pradesh:**

MASVAW is a campaign initiative by men who feel the responsibility to work against social discrimination and Violence against women and have pledged to work on self and in the society to ensure a violence free society for women. MASVAW decided to work with men as all men are not perpetrators of violence, men are brought up in a patriarchal structure due to which they promote and continue the violence on women. There are over 49 member organization and individuals spread over 22 districts of Uttar Pradesh as a part of MASVAW.

MASVAW is involved in activities like case work documentation, celebration women's day, organizing seminars on gender, making men groups at village level to attain a violence free village. MASVAW is also working with youth through sessions in colleges and universities. MASVAW ensures that all the members are working on self to bring about a change in themselves then only the concept of violence free society can be imagined.

MASVAW started its initiative with media since 2004. MASVAW always involves media in its district forum meetings. MASVAW ensures that the sensitive media person are covering the news and issues of violence against women and build a pressure at the district and block level. Media approaches MASVAW for data and statistics on violence against women.

➤ **Experiences from Father care campaign:**

MAE (Men's Action for Equity) is working with men groups on the issue of child rights and protection, sex selective abortions and social justice. Started in September 2014 in 14 districts of Madhya Pradesh the campaign has reached more than 400 villages up till now. MAE is involved in activities like consultative workshops, Rallies, street plays, working with schools and colleges and organizing gender workshops with teachers. MAE also works with potential fathers to ensure their responsibilities. MAE is actively involved with media and organizes press conferences time to time to brief media about the latest updates.

➤ **Experiences from MASVAW Uttarakhand:**

MASVAW in Uttarakhand is active since 2003. The approach of MASVAW is not that comprehensive in Uttarakhand but the initiatives are ongoing. Right now MASVAW is active in 3 districts of Uttarakhand. The focus for the MASVAW work is *panchayats* especially where the women are selected as *pradhan* but their husbands are acting as *pradhan* and are in charge of the entire decision making.

Since last two years MASVAW is working with the Taxi union on the use of abusive language. MASVAW is also working with the teachers as it came out from a girls group meeting that how they face problem in schools due to some teachers.

➤ **Experiences from Join my village intervention, Barabanki, Uttar Pradesh:**

Join my village is working on maternal and neo natal health but it also tracks the gender transformations. There are men's groups in the villages and the JMV staff conducts sessions on gender, role of men in maternal and neo natal care, men's role in household chores, contraception, violence etc. The capacity building of the staff recruited for the intervention was the prime focus as outside change can only come ones it comes from within.

Address by the Chair (Nishi Meherotra):

Justice within is very important. When we talk about media participation it is easy to count the no. of articles but what is to be analyzed is that whether they actually have brought change in themselves. **Thinking, reflecting and action should go hand in hand.**

Address by Co Chair (Satish kr. Singh):

**Movie Showcase- *Soch Sahi Mard Wahi*
Responses from the audience-**

- Role models should be established.
- When women work at home no body acknowledges but the same work is done by men for economic reasons that are acknowledged.
- The film depicts the reality of the society. This film showcases the different faces of masculinity and it leaves us with a question that what kind of masculinity we want to go ahead with.
- We need to ask ourselves that why our daughters cover their faces when they go outside.

MASVAW's one objective was to create reaction. Before MASVAW there was no voice when any incident occurred or statement degrading women was issued by any senior or political person. MASVAW always strongly opposed the formation of a men's commission though some men's groups are still advocating for it. If there is no challenge then there is no change. When power dynamics change it shakes the whole system in the beginning but then brings about a sustainable change in the society.

In our education system (esp. in technical courses) there is no space to discuss social justice. It should be ensured that all students should study human rights as a compulsory subject. If patriarchy needs to be challenged then women should be given their right in the property and their mobility should be ensured.

SUGGESTIVE STRATEGIES- FOR WORKING WITH MEN AND BOYS IN DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONS (PARALLEL SESSION- DAY 2)

Four groups were divided to work on suggestive strategies which can be applied to work with men and boys at four levels i.e. Panchayats, community, media and policy.

Suggestive strategies to work with Men and Boys -

Panchayat:

- Increase the participation of women in panchayats.
- Capacity building of women on their rights.
- Involvement of women in development of village related decision.
- Men should practice the gender equality and establish themselves as role models.
- Felicitate ideal couples who practice gender justice.
- Include issues like dowry, education, child marriage in the regular meetings of panchayats.
- Build understanding on violence based laws.
- Collect songs, phrases which are anti gender justice and revision of these songs and phrases.

Community:

- Work on self
- Target agent of changes in the community (who practice gender justice) and portray them as role models.
- Formation of youth groups and constant capacity building of the group on gender and masculinity and map the changes.
- Include all the institutions that promote masculinity and work with them.
- Make a pool of Resource person at regional level and action groups at grass root level to work directly with the community.
- Use Cultural groups, folk media, and traditional media.
- Include women in MASVAW group to review the work if MASVAW.
- Collaborate with the feminist movement.

Media-

- District dialogues and block dialogues should increase on gender justice and media should be involved actively.
- Perspective building of reporters and editors on gender justice- target press clubs and other media institutions.

- Discussion with media on gender sensitive language and provide them with optional words.
- The media is male dominant and even the responsibilities given to women are generally of desk work this should be questioned.
- The way of scripting the news specifically on violence against women should be worked upon.
- New media is being hijacked by patriarchal thoughts- MASVAW should have a facebook page and keep posting on it with gender justice articles.
- Target websites which are gender sensitive and work with them.
- Documentary, bollywood movies which are gender sensitive or issue based should be broadcasted time and again.
- There are no or negligible protest if the channels or print media are publishing something which is gender biased. Use platforms like press council to register the complaints.

Policy

It should be remembered that men are also vulnerable in some situations. When patriarchy is established it's not the violation of women's rights it's the violation of equality. Women are vulnerable but men are also.

- Curriculum should have gender studies and gender revision.
- This should be clear that all the laws are run by our taxes so we can demand accountability.
- Knowledge of the constitution is very important. Still there is lack of awareness about laws and acts.
- When policies are formed the root cause should be studied with gender perspective.
- The monitoring committee in any policy review should have both men and women participation.
- Policies should be made keeping in mind single women and divorce women.
- Some of our laws are still gender biased which should be reviewed and reworked.

Address by the Chair (Dr.Sanjay):

The discussion on men and boys are often diverted to discussions on women empowerment. The LGBT issue was missing from all the four group discussions. The issues of positive parenting should have come in the discussions.

The secretariat of MASVAW should follow up with the district level organizations for global symposium- collection of songs and phrases, photographs, stories of change.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Document the reflections of masculinity in different regions and cultures.
- Idioms and phrases which reinforce masculinity should be documented.
- Folk and traditional media reinforcing masculinity should be documented.
- Stories of change of men practicing gender justice should be documented.
- MASVAW should decide its reaction on the voices which are anti gender equality.
- Campaigns like *Gali Band Karo* (Stop the use of abusive language) should be revived.
- MASVAW should work on a strategy of working with the LGBT movement and the feminist movement.
- Media, activist and academicians should come together and work.
- A strategy to reach those who are not a part of the regional symposium should be developed.
- MASVAW should decide its reaction and response on communalism.

- Contribution and representation in global symposium (poster, paper etc) has to be decided and after the symposium reaching to those who were not a part of the global symposium.
- A regional resource pool needs to be developed and it should then be linked to other broader networks.
- To take the concept of gender justice to the schools and colleges interns should be invited and inputs should be given to them.
- To take the issue of gender justice at grass root level film festivals showcasing films based on gender justice should be organized.

WAY FORWARD

The patriarchal system gives men more power and privileges and it exists in all the religions and cultures. In this patriarchal society all the men are afraid to lose their freedom and to end this fear men use violence as a defense mechanism. One who is afraid does violence those are free from any kind of fear will not commit violence.

Masculinity decides the power relation within two men and it is different in different religions and cultures. Like in our culture physical power is an indicator of masculinity. In tribal communities the finest hunter is the superior men. The superior one gets more power and privilege.

Work with Media

Media also reinforce the superiority concept. Sensitization of media on gender issues is very important. Media persons should be updated on the recent developments in the field of gender studies and media's accountability should be ensured when taking up gender related issues

Who will decide what a crime is and what is not. If patriarchy (Nation) will decide which is the most heinous crime so the indicator for the crime will be based on masculinity concept?

Understand the Constitution

In our country people have read the constitution but very few understand it. We should understand each and every word of the constitution and how much inclusive it is and then see how much exclusive is the concept of the nation building.

MASVAW should understand the preamble of the constitution. Till now the struggle was with the social institutions. Now a new struggle is rising with a market. The leader was sold in this recent Lok Sabha election. Now when the market will sell new concept of masculinity the men will be under pressure and hence violence will not end.

Amartya Sen said that justice is that when the dignity of both the parties are maintained. *Panchayats* were an example of this kind of judicial system.

After each programme we make agents of social changes but these agents are then dissolved in the society. We need to make the institutions as an agent of change and not individuals then only the change will be sustainable. Giving training to individuals will not solve any problem. Now ambassadors of change are needed not agents of change.