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ABSTRACT

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This paper attempts to stress the premise that sexism, in its misogynistic form, is a deeply rooted legacy that persists very commonly amongst ordinary populace in societies across the geographical boundaries. It has therefore been implanted in the language systems and has taken root in mass psyche. By reflecting it in social practices, behavioral norms and institutional policies, it has denied half of the human race for centuries from their rightful places, hindered their development while depriving human civilization from contribution that could have come had their full potential been allowed to develop. It examines how sexism has intruded in language system and tended to discriminate women by rendering them invisible perpetuating the notions of male supremacy. Assiduous movement to identifying it and taking corrective measures requires mindful effort and it may be quite sometime before it could be effectively eradicated, if at all. It is also recognized that its presence in the communication organism does, even though faintly, influence thought processes, both of the users and the sufferers, and any effort to challenge sexism in the wider arena of social life should be incomplete without addressing it in the language system.

Contribution/ Originality: This study contributes in the existing literature of the English and Bengali language and originates a formula to see how far they have come to integrate words to address both sexes and become gender friendly. This study is one of very few studies which has investigated sexism in Bangla Language.

1. INTRODUCTION

Linguistic determinism theory suggests that language articulates consciousness in that, it not only orders our thought from infancy, but we also learn to use language to give utterance to our basic needs and feelings (Troyer, 1994) Its existence and development are closely linked with the social attitudes of human beings and to a great extent are affected by their social views and values, so peoples' socio-cultural behaviors and attitudes as well as thoughts are reflected in their use of the language. Historically and sociologically, our society is male-oriented and male-centered. Gender discrimination is felt and found universally. Women have been always considered to be inferior to men. Sexism in language is a reflection of sexism in social reality. It is commonly considered to be discrimination and/or hatred against people based on their sex, rather than their individual merits. It also refers to any and all systemic differentiations based on the sex of the individuals. Sexism has intruded in language system. Sexism refers to subtly different beliefs or feelings:

1. The belief or feeling that one gender or sex is inferior to or more valuable than the other;
2. Female or male chauvinism

3. The attitude of misogyny (hatred of females) or misandry (hatred of males); as well as
4. The attitude of imposing a limited and/or false notion of masculinity on males and a limited and/or false notion of femininity on females, or vice versa.
5. A feeling of distrust towards the opposite or same sex, most frequently operating at an unconscious level.

The existence of sexist language is due to sexism in society. As a social phenomenon, language is closely related to social attitudes. In the past, women were supposed to stay at home, remaining powerless and generally subordinate to men, whereas men were considered as the center both in the family and society. In a word, for a long time women had been looked on as “the weaker sex” in society. In sexism, gender is an issue that always is brought off, since it is a place where in interaction or texts gender is drawn attention to, and where it makes difference for participants (Mills, 2008).

It is quite important for this study to clearly define what is meant by sexism and sexist language. When language is used to discriminate between females and males, making both females and males unequal based on gender only, it is a form of sexist language. Sexism is a term used to refer to the idea of male superiority by referring to females as inferiors to males intellectually and psychologically. Today, sexism is challenged through movements such as Women’s Rights Movement and other such movements to erase, among other issues, language discrimination against the female gender. Nevertheless, sexist language is still present in many cultures of the world. In many ways, sexism can influence the different roles that men and women occupy in societies. Thus, gender-biased languages can be found in many parts of the world. English and Bengali are two examples of gender biased languages.

2. FOCUS OF THIS PAPER

The paper examines how sexism has intruded in the language system and tends to discriminate against women by rendering them invisible or trivializing them, and at the same time it perpetuates notions of male supremacy.

The study on the topic reveals two principal problems facing females in general in this country: encountering sexist behavior in their everyday life, and facing difficulty in their struggle to eradicate sexism from within the deeply rooted social and cultural norms.

The paper focuses on Bengali and English: two languages from different parent groups. English is a Germanic language and Bengalian Indo-Aryan language which is a branch of the Indo-Iranian languages. This paper shows how sexism has spread its domains and infiltrated all languages by comparing examples of these two different languages.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

It has been made evidently clear by research that our thinking is influenced by our language. We are unaware of this most of the times. Sometimes our language reflects out-moded ways of thinking. This makes a threat as a serious break in progress.

Sexism terminologically can be defined as a set of attitudes and behaviors towards people that judge or belittle them on the basis of their gender. Sexism comes in many different forms, including blatant, covert, and subtle sexism (Benokraitis and Feagin, 1999). Sexist language is also an example of subtle sexism in that it consists of speech that reinforces and perpetuates gender stereotypes and status differences between women and men (Banaji and Hardin, 1996; Maass and Arcuri, 1996; McConnell and Fazio, 1996; Gay, 1997; Crawford, 2001) the edifice of male supremacy has been assembled in every aspect of language from its structure to its function of use. It is the male that has constructed language with little or no contribution from women (p.147). Kaplan (1976) has pointed out that even though advantages would accrue to men in a patriarchal society if women were not permitted to use the reformed constructions of language at all, there would also be disadvantages, and the compromise- constructed

by males - has been to allow women to express themselves, but only in male terms. In this way, women remain 'outsiders', borrowers of the language. This analysis is shared by many feminists, among them Rowbotham (1973) who has said that this borrowing restricts women 'by affirming their own dependence upon the words of the powerful', and male property rights to the language are reinforced rather than weakened by women's use of language. Moreover, Spender (1985) articulates a theory of the male control over the English language and the way women have been systematically silenced through the forms of language, the conventions of male and female speech, the exclusion of women from print culture and the patriarchal structures at the heart of the gate keeping process.

Critical linguists such as Kress and Hodge (1979) have shown that meaning does not simply reside in a text but is the result of the process of negotiations and a set of relations between the social system within which the text is produced and consumed, the writer and the reader. They go on to show that this process of using language to define oneself can have effects on the language system as a whole and ultimately on the way that society is structured. Language can reflect sexism in society. Language itself may not be sexist, but it can connote sexist attitudes. Words of a language are not intrinsically good ' or bad but reflect individual or societal values. Hence the words people use to refer to certain individuals or groups reflect their individual nonlinguistic attitudes and may also reflect the culture and views of society. One speaker may use a word with positive connotations while another speaker may select a different word with negative connotations to refer to the same person. For example, the same individual may be referred to as a terrorist by one group and as a freedom fighter by another (Mills, 2008).

Our view of women and their place in society has undergone a radical change in recent times. Discriminatory and negative views that women are sub-ordinate to men have been replaced by the view that we all have equal rights and status.

However, there are examples in the language that still carry the notion of in-equality of the olden days. Some of them are inherent in the language, others have been rectified, for example: English distinction between 'Mrs.' and 'Ms.' is not parallel by equivalent male titles showing whether a man is married or not. This employs, that it is important for women to show if she is married. This has been corrected by the introduction of word 'Ms.' which is a female equivalent of 'Mr.' and does not make any pointer towards the marital status of the bearer.

Similarly, the word *Master* refers to someone who is the boss or overlord but its equivalent word, *Mistress*, has a dubious meaning which sometimes denotes a female partner in an extramarital relationship. In Bengali, we have "Begum" for married women and "Mossammat" for unmarried women, but these are not frequently used.

Historically, there are many more words in the English language for referring to the vices of a woman than there are for a man. There is another unfair tendency that involves the notion of prototype. Here the bias against women is in the concepts of the words all, though not in the word itself e.g. the neutral word 'doctor' refers to a prototype male doctor while the word 'nurse' refers to a female. Words such as "lady doctor" or "male nurse" is used to reinforce the fact that a doctor is a usually a male, while a nurse is a women in the normal sense.

The use of words such as 'man' and 'he' historically have disadvantaged women. When conveying supposedly gender neutral meaning even for gender neutral concept, e.g., Man is used to mean mankind, God is often referred to as 'He' (Romaine, 2005).

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, male pronouns were not used to refer to both males and females. The pronoun 'they' was used to refer to people of either sex even if the referent was a singular noun, as shown by Chesterfield's statement in 1759 as quoted by Spender: "If a person is born of a gloomy temper...they cannot help it." By the eighteenth century, grammarians (males) created the rule designating the male pronouns as the general term, and it wasn't until the nineteenth century that the rule was applied widely, after the act of Parliament in Britain in 1850 sanctioned its use (Spender, 1985).

Literature is full of examples by use of words, such as 'wife' is used in a negative sense. These inherent disabilities in the language itself illustrate the dilemma of those who want to eliminate linguistic bias against

women. It is important to be realistic about what can be achieved. It is worth noticing that in his writing, Liu (2004) affirmed that the sexually promiscuous words used for females are far more popular than for males.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study has been conducted to evaluate the use of words and the presupposition in them that have sexist dimensions in the English language. This aims mainly to be an analytical paper that breaks down the issue into its component parts, evaluates and presents them as part of a plain academic exercise. To a large extent this tends to be expository by nature because of the writers views about inequality between sexes in society, and how that has intruded into the language system. The writers do not make a claim or give an opinion but justify their conclusions with specific evidence, and sometimes make recommendations to improve. The goal of the paper is to convince the readers that the claim is true based on the evidence provided.

Although a lot of empirical studies have been carried out in this field, most of the work has concentrated on English rather than other languages. In Bangladesh, research in this field is rare. One of the very works on this topic is a chapter in Rajib Humayun's book "Shomaj Bhasha Biggyan". I got a lot of examples from this book regarding almost all the spheres of language that I have discussed in this paper. However this chapter deals with sexism at the lexical level and not phrase and discourse.

Another book titled "Bhasha Totto Baakaron" contains a chapter named "Lingo." This chapter contains all the male terms and their equivalent female terms created by adding an affix. This has ample examples and has helped me to provide examples in Bangla regarding sexism in the sphere of morphology.

For the purpose of this study, desk research method has been followed. Thus, secondary and primary data have been used. The major sources of secondary data are textbooks, previous research studies and reports available from web sites and interviews. The data collected have been summarized, analyzed and interpreted to make the study meaningful. To make the study informative and useful, the materials of the paper have been presented systematically so that fruitful inference can be drawn from them.

The first hand information is collected from interviews. The researchers visited Bangla Academy and interviewed a high ranking official and three people who work in the field sociolinguistics. Even though a set of questions were prepared, they were not placed in that exact form or serial, rather, they were addressed during the hour long discourse with the Director General of the Academy and other interviewees.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Concept of Sexism in Language

Language is the means of expression that is unique to human beings. It is only normal that human language would contain all sorts of reflection about the human thought process, emotions, ideas, abstracts, prejudices and so forth of every part of society, no exception in English and Bengali.

We all know that human beings are divided between genders— the discrimination that one group practices against another group, which occurs more frequently by males toward females is called sexism. It indicates that the cultural attitude of the person, who is writing or speaking, is positively stressing on men and mainly displaying women (Weatherall, 2002).

Therefore, it is the use of language, which devalues members of one sex, almost invariably women, and this fosters gender inequality. It discriminates against women by rendering them invisible or trivializing them, and at the same time it perpetuates notions of male supremacy (Swim *et al.*, 2004).

5.2. The Concern

Various reasons can be cited why sexist connotation in languages is important. Mostly they stem from linguistic determinism theory and can be summarized under the following points:

- Language articulates consciousness
- It not only orders our thought, but from infancy, we learn to use language to give utterance to our basic needs and feelings.
 - Language reflects culture
 - It encodes and transmits cultural meanings and values in our society.
 - Language affects socialization
 - Children learning a language absorb the cultural assumptions and biases underlying language use and see these as an index to values and attitudes of their society. Social inequity reflected in language can thus powerfully affect a child's later behavior and beliefs. (Sapir-Whorf hypothesis)

5.3. Sexist Language Types

Nearing the end of the 20th century, there has been a rise in the use of gender-neutral language in the western world. This is often attributed to the rise of feminism. Gender-neutral language, as a part of political correctness, is the avoidance of gender-specific job titles, non-parallel usage, and other usage that is felt by some to be sexist. Having gender-specific titles and gender-specific pronouns imply a system bias to exclude individuals based on their sex. Language (words) that excludes women or renders them invisible could be in:

1. The use of the generic masculine subsuming all humanity in the terms *man, father, brother, master*.

Current Usage	Alternative
Man	human being, human, person, individual
Mankind, men	human beings, humans, humankind, humanity, people, human race, human species, society, men and women (Kennedy, 1993)

We have these problems in the Bengali Language, for example-

Manob (man)	Manob Sompod (Human Recourse), but we do not have 'Manobi' Sompod
Manob (")	Manob Bondhon (Human chain)

2. The singular masculine pronouns such as *he, his, him*.

Examples are as follow:

When a reporter covers a controversial story, he has a responsibility to present both sides of the issue.

- *Each student should bring his notebook to class every day.*
- *Everyone packed his own lunch.*

Suggested alternatives:

- *When reporters cover controversial stories, they have a responsibility...*
- *All students should bring their notebooks to class every day.*

In contrast, we have 'Taar' (him/her) and 'shey' (he/she) which are neither masculine nor feminine.

3. Terms ending in 'man' to refer to functions that may be performed by individuals of either sex.

Current Usage	Alternatives
Anchorman	anchor, anchorperson
Businessman	business executive, manager, business owner
Chairman	chairperson, chair

Note: There is a tendency to use "chairperson" to apply only to women while "chairman" is used for men, even though "chairperson" is applicable to both sexes. "Chairperson" is preferable for either sex (Kennedy, 1993).

In Bengali, we have, “*bon manush*”(ape), “*bhalo manush*”(good person), “*beta chele*”(boy), “*meye chele*”(girl) etc. *Manush* and *chela* mean ‘man’ and ‘boy’ respectfully, but when added to certain words, mean a certain ‘kind’ or ‘category’ of people.

4. Terms used as though they apply to adult males only, or are appropriated to a particular sex.

Examples:

- *Settlers moved west taking their wives and children with them.*
- Alternatives: Use "families" for "wives and children"
- *Farmers found their drought conditions difficult, and so did their wives.*
- Alternatives: Use "spouses" for "wives"

Current Usage	Alternatives
Lawyers/doctors	Lawyers/doctors
Farmers and their wives	Farmers and their spouses

Similarly, the Bengali language also has these expressions. For example, *Dokandar* (Shop Keeper), *Mojur* (Day-labour), *Bikroy protinidi* (Sales representative). These words should refer to both adult males and females though they only refer to adult males.

5. The generic masculine reflects gender inequality in that women are never seen in terms of general or representative humanity. Men represent the universal or the human to which women are nominal. For instance, in Bangla, the word “*Manob Dhormo*” reflects on the male gender in terms of human nature.

6. Language that trivializes women or diminishes their stature.

7. Feminine suffixes such as -ess, -ette, -trix, or -enne, make unnecessary reference to the person's gender, suggest triviality, unimportance, or inferiority of women occupying such a position.

Current Usage	Alternatives
Actress	Actor
Hostesses	Hosts
Poetess	Poet
Authoress	Author

In Bengali, we see many sexist elements as well; for example, the female suffix-*ess* causes particular problems: a man is a poet, while a woman is only a poetess. Similarly, in Bengali there are many affixes such as, (*Mohila*)□□□□□□, (*Promila*) □□□□□□□□ which are sexist in practice (Rajib, 2001).

Examples:

Shikkhok (teacher)	Shikkhika (female teacher)
Lekhokh(writer)	Lekhika (female writer)
Ovineta(actor)	Ovinetri (female actor)
Kishan (farmer)	Kishani (female farmer)

8. Use of gender-linked modifiers sound gratuitous and patronizing, and suggest that the norm for some occupations is for a particular use.

Current Usage	Alternatives
Lady Doctor	Doctor
Female writer	Writer
Female lawyer	Lawyer
Working wives	Wives working outside the home

In Bengali-

Current Usage	Alternatives
Mohila (female) doctor	Doctor
Mohila (female) ainjibi	Ainjibi (Lawyer)

· Such modifiers imply that they are not real lawyers, doctors, nurses, workers, etc.

.When it is necessary to point out the female aspect of a person occupying a given role or occupation, use female or woman, rather than lady, e.g. Mohila Prohori (female guard).

9. Language which disparages and marginalizes women (or persons of another gender).

Current Usage	Alternatives
Girl	Adult female
Salesgirl	Sales women
Ladies	Women

In Bangla, we are not devoid of these sexist expressions. We have, for example, 'Juboti'(female youth), 'Kumari' (virgin), 'Nari' (woman)" etc.

10. Language that fosters unequal gender relations.

Current Usage	Alternatives
Man and wife	Husband and wife
Men and girls	Men and women; Boys and girls

Likewise, Bangla has got some troublesome expressions too. For example, 'Poti-potni' (husband and wife), 'Purush ebong meye' (Men and girls).

11. The use of terms that call attention to a person's gender in designating occupations, positions, roles, etc.

Current Usage	Alternatives
Delivery boys	Deliverers
Delivery men	
Motherhood	Parenthood
Fatherhood	

In the same way, there are words and phrases that refer to a person's gender in assigning occupations and positions in Bengali.

Examples: " Bua"(maid), Kajer meye"(maid), "Matrito"(motherhood), "Srimoti"(woman), "Prodan Shikkhika"(head mistress), Shikhoyotri" (wife of a teacher- used wrongly)

Furthermore, sexism can also be found in idioms. . "Good food! Delicious women!" was once quoted as an example by the linguist [Nilsen \(1977\)](#) to explain the feminine role in the American culture and their image in people's mind. He points out that it is common to compare the female with delicious food in English. Obviously women's role is not appreciated as much as men's.

6. SEXISM IN BANGLA LANGUAGE

Sexism is also apparent in Bengali language just like English. In Bengali language, we find that the language also has male bias.

Not many studies have been made about sexism in language as an issue in Bangladesh. However, the most detailed one is that of [Hassan and Alamgir \(2013\)](#) where they discuss a number of areas showing the effect of the

role of sexism in Bangladesh. Since this paper addresses sexism in Bengali, it is of considerable significance to shed some light on the status of the women and the feminine gender in Bangladesh.

Hassan and Alamgir (2013) state: "Sexism mostly happens in favour of the male gender and not the other way round" (p.203); and Bengali is a masculine language not a feminine one". Bengali, in all of its roles and social levels, according to Hassan and Alamgir, "are affected by the various lexical elements of English language and these also provoked confusions in the mind of the non-native speakers of English language especially due to sexism" (p.200).

While Bengali etymology manifests irrefutable male bias, the language itself is devoid of gender consciousness, which is a great asset in the modern world where women are gaining influence and support in their struggle for equality. All Indo-European languages, except Armenian, have grammatical categories of gender. English fares a little better by eliminating grammatical gender, but it retains the natural gender in the third person pronouns and in social and professional titles. The third person personal pronouns "he" and "she" prove to be the most troublesome in our changing society today. Although attempts have been made to replace the all-inclusive "he" or "his" with "s/he" or "she or he" or "his or her" in a non-gender specific situation, the problem remains unsolved, because many people refuse to accept them due to linguistic clumsiness. No such problem exists in Bengali, because the third person personal pronouns do not specify any gender: '*shey*' (he/she) and '*tar*' (his/her) for both male and female.

6.1. How to Use Non-Sexist Language

Non-sexist languages, also called gender neutral, non-gender specific or inclusive language, refer to language that includes women and treats women and men equally. Language changes constantly in response to our needs. Non-discriminatory language can be ensured in a variety of ways. A number of suggestions and alternatives are listed below, but there will be other appropriate effective choices.

6.2. Titles of Address, Rank, Occupation, Status

As a general rule, use a first name, a neutral title or nothing. Where titles are appropriate, use parallel titles.

Instead of	Use
Miss or Mrs (English)	Ms to parallel Mr (except where the woman prefers Miss or Mrs)
Jonab (Bengali) This is the equivalent of both <i>Mr/ Mrs/ Miss</i>	Begum

When listing names, use alphabetical order except where order by seniority is more important. If addressing correspondents, whose name and gender are unknown, do not assume they are male (Warren, 1978).

6.3. Personal Pronouns

Use *he*, *his*, *him*, *himself* only when referring specifically to a male person. The use of *he* and *she*, *she* and *he*, *she/he*, *s/he* to refer to either female or male persons can be cumbersome. The following are acceptable alternatives:

(a) Rewrite the sentence in the plural.

Instead of	Use
The lecturer will display his timetable on his door. Each student is responsible for material on loan to him.	Lecturers will display their timetables on their office doors. Students are responsible for material they borrow.

(b) Rewrite the sentence in the passive.

Instead of	Use
He must return it by the due date.	It must be returned by the due date.

(c) Omit pronouns

Instead of	Use
Anyone who wants his work evaluated....	Anyone wanting work evaluated....

(Warren, 1978)

It is not acceptable to present material with the disclaimer that all masculine nouns and pronouns are to be taken as referring to both females and males. However, we don't have such problems in Bengali.

6.4. Patronizing and Demeaning Expressions

Avoid terms or expressions that are patronizing and demeaning.

Instead of	Use
The girls in the office...	The staff or the office assistants...
The ladies on the staff...	The women on the staff... (Use ladies only to parallel gentlemen.)
Mohila Kormokorta (Bengali) Meaning- <i>Female officer</i>	Kormokorta—Meaning- <i>Officer</i>

6.5. Sex Role Stereotyping

Avoid sexist assumptions.

Instead of	Use
Lecturers and their wives...	Lecturers and their partners/spouses...
In Bengali, we have " <i>shikhok</i> (teacher) and <i>Shikhoyetri</i> (wife of a teacher). At one point this word (Shikhoyetri) used to mean female teacher but it actually means-wife of a teacher mainly the headmaster's wife.	

6.6. Gender Descriptions

Avoid irrelevant, gratuitous gender descriptions.

Instead of	Use	
a lady editor	An editor	
a male nurse	a nurse	
Mohilaainjibi (Female Lawyer)	Ainjibi (Lawyer)	Bengali

When referring to a position, a quality or an action that might apply to either gender, use a gender neutral term. Also, avoid the use of 'man' or of composite words involving the syllable, '-man', which may imply the term is exclusively male.

Instead of	Use
Air hostess	Flight attendant
The average man / the common man	The average person / ordinary people / people in general
Chairman	Chairperson / chair / convenor / mediator / coordinator / president
Bimanbala(Bengali), Air-hostess	

It is important to note that it is contrary to legislation to advertise a job vacancy in a way which implies that one sex only will be considered, except in special circumstances as for a dramatic performance. The use of gender-marker terms perpetuates and reinforces the outdated attitude that some women are to be considered first as a female and second as a person of skill and talent (Warren, 1978).

6.7. Word Order

Instead of	Use	English
men and women	women and men	
boys and girls	girls and boys	
Vodro lok ebong vodro mohila	Vodro mohila and Vodro lok	Bengali
Chele-meyera	Meye-chelera	

6.8. Word Choice

Avoid making sex-typed generalizations.

When describing the same characteristics in women and men, use similar terms.

Instead of	Use
ambitious men and aggressive women	ambitious men and women -or- ambitious women and men
Strong willed men and obstinate women	Strong willed men and women (Warren,n.d & Kennedy,1993)
Bengali	Bengali
*Shoktishali lok/purush ebong doyalu mohila	Shoktishali lok ebong mohila/ Shokti shali mohila ebong lok
*Buddiman lok ebong boka mohila	Buddiman lok and mohila
*Shahosi lok ebong vitu mohila	Shahosi lok ebong mohila
*The last three examples are translations of the first two examples.	

6.9. Bangla Academy View

The dialogue has covered a wide range. On social evolution – the breakdown of matriarchal society, the progression of human societies from hunter-gatherers to agricultural settlers, the development of Indic and Semitic faiths, the gradual decay of female contribution in the production and accumulation of necessities and their reflection on Aristotelian thinking and scriptures (Manu-Sanghita, The Quran and the Bible) were discussed. A shift in paradigm in male thinking process is acknowledged as necessary. However, the equality movement should take its own natural course and any measures involuntary and externally imposed in nature could be counterproductive. Emancipation should be initially mental, and then take roots in other spheres of social, cultural and economic life. This should come from the women themselves.

- institute/universities because they have responsibilities

One of the interviewee's quote

“ I am not happy with the work of Bangla Academy because they can publish a booklet containing politically correct expressions and vocabulary for general use like the way UNESCO has published a book in which it suggested how to be politically appropriate in the use of language.”

6.10. Interview

The suggestions we got from interviews to avoid gender bias language in Bengali are:

- Women have to take steps and they have to be autonomous and independent
- They have to create awareness among the female community, which in turn will influence the male mentality
- Teachers have to be trained in all levels from primary to tertiary.
- National course books and text books need to be modified.
- People can research with the help of Bangla academy/International Mother language

7. CAUSES OF SEXISM IN BANGLA LANGUAGE

There is no time scale that can be pointed at as to when sexist terms, word or phrases or sexism in general began to appear in the lexicon of English language. The same goes for Bangla Language. There is no doubt that

they do exist. And there is no doubt that they are more than sparingly used, which can be for multiple reasons: these could be socio-economic conditions, socialization, traditional culture and religious factors. The following context will give a brief analysis on the main causes of sexism in Bangla Language in terms of these four major aspects.

A. Social-Economic Condition

In general, there is a widespread agreement amongst anthropologist that at the dawn of human civilization the majority of human societies across the earth were either matriarchal or at least there were no visible distinction between the roles of men and women. A matriarchal society would be dominated by women in which females, especially mothers, have the central roles of political leadership, moral authority, and control of property. So women had a higher social status than men.

However, these conditions did not last when human individuals and societal survival became more and more dependent and people started co-operating each other and they started living together in the form of a society. Humans became dependent on hunting and gathering; both of which required physical strength and such other attributes, which by nature were available to males in greater quantities than to women. In the struggle for survival women became subsidiary to the males and the political leverages shifted toward males who would take discriminatory attitude towards women. Women are restrained in limited area; they had to be dependent on men. They lost their social, economic and family status. Language only indicates the superior status and central role of men but the inferior, passive role of women; hence, language is marked with discrimination towards women and sexism in language came forth.

B. Socialization

During ruing the process of human civilization, which is also known as socialization, language formed and changed as time went by. Thus one of the most important causes of language sexism is the socialization. Socialization begins at birth. It shapes people to behave in appropriate ways. Much of people's behavior is the result of socialization. Children learn appropriate behavior through role models, games and toys, children's books and educational schools. They absorb the prejudice against girls and women in the sex biased textbooks and develop according to gender stereotyping.

For example, some children's books may suggest to children that science is the field created for the male. They assume that the boy child will grow up to be manly which is synonymous to being decisive, forthright and brave. And these attributes are considered virtuous, desirable and in general better than being be polite, conservation, obedient, and gentle. These later qualities are often expected of girls while girls are required to perform accordingly. Teachers, as well as parents, who are also important agents of socialization, tend to regard boys as more creative than girls, thereby creating much personality and behavioral patterns.

Mass media also have a great influence on peoples view about gender.

People spend a lot of time watching TV and reading newspapers. Sports that are exclusively men's are watched more and take more prime time of the TV. We hardly watch women's cricket or football and there is hardly a women's sport tournament that is as much popular as that of the men's equivalent. So few people escape exposure to the vivid patterns of images, information and values in the world of mass media, among which some are sex biased. Because of the effect of society and culture, the ideology of women dependent on men has been deep-rooted and developed into a kind of social psychology.

C. Traditional Culture

Traditionally and culturally in Bangla language, there are a few adjectives female specific, such as " Romoni" (a woman who is meant for beauty), " Obola" (a woman whocannot speak out), "Komolmotinari"(Soft-hearted

woman) etc. Women are always treated in these ways. There are numerous examples like these. Women are always looked upon as the object of beauty and entertainment; they are mute and also always soft- hearted (Fazlul and Naiyam, 2007).

D. Religious Factors

Religiously women are defined to be next to men, though in Hinduism they are considered to be the source of power. But in practice no religion permits priority practice to female, and this influences in the linguistic aspects of the subcontinent including Bangla.

So, it can be said that linguistic sexism is rooted in the social inequality between men and women. Sexism may be social in origin, rather than linguistic. So to uproot sexism from language we should focus on the attitude and behavior patterns that give rise to sexist languages. These language configurations originate from the prevailing social conditions. Therefore, we should concentrate changing our social behavior and attitude pattern if we want to eradicate sexism from language. If social inequality remains, linguistic attempts to achieve real equality will be a far cry (Lakoff, 1973).

8. CONCLUSION

Introduction of gender-neutral words will not itself guarantee equal treatment of women but we should be discriminating while using gender-neutral concepts with the male prototype.

Though language should be neutral, it is not. Grammar is not neutral, either. Rather, it works in the way of serving authoritarianism and oppression against certain groups and individuals. Sadly, one of the truths about language is that it is authoritative and oppressing.

This is evident through the asymmetric relations between men and women. Men are the standard of measurement in language, and women can express themselves only through relations with men. The standard of measurement is set by a majority, which has something to do with who has power, not who outnumbers.

Language does not accommodate equality. Violence in language - men against women, whites against blacks and majorities against minorities, all can be traced. The inequality arises from power structure of the society, but at the same time the inequality serves as a tool of perpetuating the distorted order. It is scary, therefore, seeing how the hierarchical society and linguistic inequality work together to maintain the circle. As Maggio (1989) (as cited in Liu (2004)) puts it: "It is also necessary to acknowledge that there can be no solution to the problem of sexism in society on the level of language alone" unless we try to eliminate sexual inequality in society by which language equality can be achieved.

We can only hope that gradually changing the habit of the society to use gender neutral language will change men`s fundamental perception on women. Before this can be attained, the problems surrounding the concept, definition and distinction in language usage must be settled. As determinist propounds, language controls human mind in a secretive manner.

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Appendix 1

Structured questions for interview:

1. Does discriminatory language pattern exist in Bengali language?
2. Is there any pressure group working towards an anti-sexist reform in language usage akin to what Politically Correct Movement has achieved so far for English language?
3. How important is it to address the issue now and what is the role of Bangla Academy in bringing about those changes?

The questionnaire was prepared not to probe if discriminatory practice subsists, but to pin down, yet another male dominated plutocratic machinery into admitting that it does and exert influence toward reformative measures, if not even just to create awareness about it, in the least.

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