



## Mains Practice Question

**Q.** How do societal attitudes towards women, shaped by cultural norms and gender stereotypes, perpetuate gender inequality in everyday life? **(150 words)**

30 Dec, 2024 GS Paper 1 Indian Society

### Approach

- Introduction: Define how cultural norms and gender stereotypes shape societal attitudes towards women and perpetuate inequality.
- Body: Discuss their impact in media, workplace, and family, and highlight measures to address the issue.
- Conclude suitably.

### Introduction

Societal attitudes towards **women**, shaped by **cultural norms** and **gender stereotypes**, often portray them as passive, nurturing, or subordinate, fueling widespread gender inequality in workplaces, families, and public spaces. **India ranks 127<sup>th</sup> out of 146 in the Global Gender Gap Report 2023**, highlighting major gender disparities in economic, educational, health, and political spheres.

### Body

#### Societal Attitudes Towards Women

- **Cultural Norms and Gender Stereotypes:**
  - From a young age, **boys** and **girls** are socialized into distinct roles, with women often expected to perform domestic duties and care for children. These **gendered expectations** limit women's access to opportunities and decision-making power.
  - In the **media**, women are often portrayed as either passive objects of male desire or supportive figures in domestic roles. Such portrayals **reinforce stereotypes** and further limit women's social mobility and career aspirations.
- **Impact in Family and Workplace:**
  - In the **family**, women are largely expected to be **primary caregivers**, resulting in an unequal division of domestic labor. This often limits women's ability to pursue **professional careers**, leaving them financially dependent.
  - In the **workplace**, **glass ceilings**, **pay gaps**, and **biases** against women in leadership roles are a result of entrenched stereotypes that underestimate women's professional capabilities. These stereotypes prevent equal access to opportunities and hinder women's career progression.

#### Steps Have Been Taken To Address The Issue

- **Government and Judicial Measures:**
  - The **government** has introduced various initiatives to address these societal imbalances.
    - For instance, the **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao** scheme aims to improve the status of

women, focusing on education and reducing female foeticide.

- Programs like **Maternity Benefits Act** and **Equal Remuneration Act** also work towards ensuring better workplace equality.
- The **judiciary** has made significant efforts to challenge **gender stereotypes**. The Supreme Court's decision to implement the '**Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013**' marked a critical step in creating safer spaces for women.
  - Additionally, **gender-sensitive rulings**, such as those addressing derogatory language used in legal proceedings, play a crucial role in redefining societal attitudes towards women.
- **Addressing the Root Causes:**
  - Despite these measures, the persistence of **patriarchal values** in both urban and rural areas indicates that the problem is deeply embedded in cultural practices.
    - The **lack of enforcement**, widespread **discrimination**, and **patriarchal social structures** often undermine efforts for gender equality.

## Conclusion

Challenging **cultural norms** and **gender stereotypes** is essential for creating a **more equitable** society. While steps by the **government** and **judiciary** have led to significant progress, there is still a need for continuous **social awareness** and stronger **implementation** of policies to effectively dismantle patriarchy and ensure true **gender equality**.

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