

Changing Mentalities about Gender Roles

Nepali transcript:

अंतरवार्ताकर्ता: हजुरको विचारमा अब यस्तो अब महिलाहरूलाई मदत गर्न... होइन? हजुर जस्तो मान्छेहरू अब महिला हो कि पुरुष हो तयसको, त्यो कतिको महत्वपूर्ण हुन्छ?

सोनी: महिला र पुरुष हुने महत्वपूर्ण होइन, त्यो भावना हुनुपर्छ। जुन भावना हुन्छ नि कि हामीले चाहिँ हाम्रो देशको महिलाहरूलाई, हाम्रो देशको छोरीहरूलाई, हाम्रो देशको केटाकेटीहरूलाई चाहिँ अगाडि बढाउनु पर्छ, उनीहरूलाई पढाउनु पर्छ, उनीहरूले पनि समाजमा केहि गरेर देखाउन सक्नु पर्छ, भन्ने सोच हुनुपर्छ। र मैले मेरो कामको सिलसिलामा धेरै पुरुषहरू पनि भेटाएको छुँ जसको सोच त्यस्तै छ। नेपालमा चाहिँ, हामीले चाहिँ patriarchal society जुन भन्छ, पुरुषहरूको भनाइ चाहिँ धेरै चल्छ। तर त्यसमा पनि धेरै पुरुषहरू यस्ता पनि छन् जसको सोचाई, जसको विचार, चाहिँ अलि फरक भएर... होइन? 'हामीले हाम्रो छोरीहरूलाई पढाएर अगाडी बढाउनुपर्छ।' त्यसैले पुरुष र महिला होइन, हुर्काईमा पनि भर पर्दछ। होइन? अनि मैले सधैँ मेरो काममा के भन्छु भने हामीले यदि समाजमा केहि फरक केहि चेतना ल्याउनु पर्ने हो भने हामीले चाहिँ बच्चा नै¹ देखिन जुन केटा र केटीमा व्यवहार गर्छौँ, त्यो घर-घर देखि नै फरक गर्नु हुँदैन। हामीले के भन्छौँ भने केटि मान्छेहरूले यो गर्नु हुन्छ, केटा मान्छेहरूले यो गर्नु हुँदैन भनेर जुन कुराहरू गरिराखेका² हुन्छौँ नि? जस्तै उद्धारणको लागि, हरेक घरमा चाहिँ खाना-साना³ खाँदाखेरि, खाना खाइसकेपछि

¹ The interviewer does not pronounce the 'नै/nai' part, because she says it quickly and joins it with the previous word, making it sound like 'बच्चाइ/ bacchai' as opposed to 'बच्चा नै/ baccha nai'. This is done frequently while speaking quickly. For example, in English, we might shorten 'want to' to 'wanna'.

² Here also, the interviewer condenses the word while pronouncing it, making it sound like 'गरिरा/garira' instead of 'गरिराखेका/garirakheka'. In speech, these long words are frequently condensed to make them shorter.

³ When trying to express many things that are similar, Nepalis have a habit of rhyming that word with a 's' sound in front. In this case, the interviewee said 'खाना-साना/ khana-sana' as a way to describe food and other similar things. For example, if you wanted to say there were a lot of musical instruments such as drums in a place, you would probably say 'drums-srums'. The second word usually isn't actually a word.

केटीले चाहिँ सबै जुठो-सुठो⁴ सफा गरि, सबै सफा गरेर गर्नुपर्छ। छोरा मान्छेहरुलाई चाहिँ के भन्छ भने – ‘ए तिमीले गर्नु पर्दैन, भयो! तिमी गए हुन्छ!’ भनेर। त्यो जुन सानो-सानो कुराहरुले चाहिँ, बिस्तारै बिस्तारै केटा मान्छेहरुको मनमा के आउँछ भने, हामीले यो गर्नु पर्दैन, हामीले चाहिँ यसो नगरे हुन्छ भन्ने त्यो जुन हुने हो त्यो घर-घर बाटै सुरु हुने हो। त्यसैले हरेक घरमा हामीहरु सबैले चाहिँ हाम्रो छोरा र छोरीमा फरक नगरिकन उनीहरुलाई, त्यहि अनुरूप उनीहरुले केहि गरेको काम उसले पनि गर्नु हुन्छ, उसले गरेको उसले पनि गर्नु हुन्छ, भनेर यदि हामीले ल्यायो भने हाम्रो २० वर्ष - २५ वर्ष पछिको समाजमा चाहिँ केहि फरक पक्का पनि हुन्छ। अहिलेको जुन युवा-युवतीहरु हुन्, अहिले छन् अहिले यिनीहरु, अहिलेको धेरै धेरै फरक छ हाम्रो पालामा भन्दा, उनीहरुमा चाहिँ यो चेतना जाग्दै आइराखेको छ।

अंतरवार्ताकर्ता: अब कति महिलाहरु छन् जो... केहि गर्न मन छ तर त्यतिको शिक्षा हुँदैन कि त्यो पैसा हुँदैन कि परिवारको साथ हुँदैन। त्यस्तो महिलाहरुलाई अब एउटा message दिन चाहनु हुन्छ भने त्यो message के हुन्थ्यो?

सोनी: महिलाहरु यस्ता धेरै-धेरै छन्। जो चाहिँ अगाडी बढ्न चाहन्छन्, जो पढ्न खोज्छन्... होइन? तर म, यो वहाँहरुलाई के भन्न चाहन्छु भने, धेरै जना मान्छेहरु पनि छन्, धेरै समाजमा यस्ता मान्छेहरु पनि छन्, धेरै संस्थाहरु पनि छन् कोहि - कोहि जसले चाहिँ यस्तो मान्छेहरुलाई खोजीराखेका⁵ छन् कि कसैले केहि गर्न इच्छा गरिररखेका होला। र त्यस्तोमा चाहिँ अलिकति आर्थिक सहयोग दिने नभए उनीहरुलाई कसरि हुन्छ मदत गरि अगाडी बढाउने। होइन? त्यो गर्ने तिर लागिराखेकाहरु⁶ पनि धेरै छन्। उहाँले के गर्नु पर्यो भने, उहाँले चाहिँ एकचोटी यता-

However, in this case, ‘साना/ sana’ means small, but this meaning is arbitrary; it has nothing to do with the context.

⁴ Here, too the interviewer is trying to express that there are many things similar to ‘जुठो-सुठो (jutho-sutho)’.

⁵ The speaker does not say the full word, but rather only pronounces half of it as ‘खोजीरा/ khojira’. This is done when someone is speaking quickly. For example, it’s like shortening ‘want to’ to ‘wanna’ in English.

⁶ Here too, the speaker pronounces only half of the word as ‘लागिरा/ lagira’ and then adds the two end syllables of the word ‘हरु/ haru’ rather than saying the full word. The syllable ‘रा’ is assumed to represent the word ‘राखेका/rakheka’, therefore it can be shortened. However, the ‘हरु/ haru’ part cannot be shortened, because it is not assumed to be represented by any short sound or syllable. Thus, one can say ‘लागिरा/

उता बुझेर सम-संस्थाहरुलाई सम्पर्क गरेर कोहि चिनजान भए कोहि मान्छेहरुलाई चिनेर होइन? कुरा गरेर, बुझेर जानु पर्यो। यस बाहेकको कोहि-कोहि सम-संस्थाहरु पनि यस्ता छन् जसले चाहिँ अखबारहरुमा बिग्यपन्हारू पनि दिन्छन। हाम्रो चाहिँ यस्तो यस्तो खोजी छ, कोहि यदि नसक्नेहरु छ भने हामीले चाहिँ पढाउनुमा मदत गर्छु, नभए यस्तोमा मदत गर्ने भनिराखेका आइराखेका छ।

अंतरवार्ताकर्ता: हजुर। हुन्छ। धन्यवाद।

सोनी: यहाँलाई पनि धन्यवाद।

English translation:

Interviewer: In your opinion, now helping these women... *Hoina*?⁷ How important of a difference does it make that people like you are women or men?

Soni: Being a man or a woman is not important; the mentality needs to be there. The mentality that the women of our country, the daughters of our country, the children of our country need to move forward, they need to be educated, they also need to show that they can contribute and show this to society; this thought or mentality needs to be present. And during my work I have found a lot of men that hold this kind of thinking. In Nepal what we know as the patriarchal society is prevalent, and in this, men have the primary saying. But, even then, there are some men who definitely have a different mentality, different thoughts, who think differently... *Hoina*? 'We need to educate our daughters and help them move forward independently.' That's why it isn't about only men or women, but a lot of it is also the way people are brought up. *Hoina*? And what I always emphasize and say is that if we want to make society aware of these facts, what we first need to do is we need to make sure that even when they are children, girls and boys should not be treated differently, starting from their homes. What we say is that, things we tend to say, like girls can do this, boys can't do that, right? Like for example, in every house when you have had your food, the girl has to clean up all the '*jutho*'⁸-*sutho*'⁹.

lagira' and the listener will automatically assume the 'राखेका/rakheka', but since 'हरु/haru' is not 'represented' by any syllable, the speaker needs to add it.

⁷ The actual meaning of '*Hoina*' is 'no'. However, in this case it is used as a filler word, asking for confirmation or just making sure that the listener is following what the speaker is saying.

⁸ The word '*jutho*' cannot be directly translated into English. In Nepali culture, people eat their food with their hands. A plate is considered '*jutho*' when the hand that touched your mouth (or actually your saliva) touches the plate again. Thus no one touches the plate except the person whose '*jutho*' the plate is. People don't share food from a plate. However, the dishes need to be cleared at the end of each meal and it is not considered to be a very appealing job, and this task of clearing the '*jutho*' plates and cleaning them is a

What boys are told is, ‘Oh, you don’t have to do this! Leave it! You can go!’ These small things that we say will affect the boys and slowly, slowly they will start to think that they don’t need to do these chores, they don’t have to help out, and this mentality in these kids starts from the home itself. This is why, in every home, everyone needs to make sure that they don’t treat their sons and daughters differently, and in that sense make them understand that what one can do, the other can do too, and what one can’t do, the other can’t do it too, and if we are successful in teaching this there will surely be a difference in the societal thinking after twenty to twenty-five years. The young men and women nowadays, they are very different than how we would’ve been in our time, and they are increasingly becoming aware of this fact.

Interviewer: Now there are many women that... they want to do something but they don’t have proper education or they don’t have money or they don’t have the support of their family. If you had to give a message to these women, what message would you give?

Soni: There are many women like these. Those who want to stand on their own, who want to study... *Hoina*? But what I would like to say to them is that, there are many people, there are many people in the society, and there are many organizations too that are specifically looking for people who have the will to do something. And if they can’t give financial support, they are willing to help them move forward in any other way. *Hoina*? There are a lot of people who are moving towards doing that as well. *Hoina*? What they should do is they should, once, *bujhera*¹⁰ contact organizations if they know people who know about it. *Hoina*? They should talk, *bujhera*, and then go. Besides these, there are other organizations that even give advertisements in newspapers. They will ask things like ‘We are looking for people who are marginalized or unable, and we will educate them or help them.’

Interviewer: *Hajur*¹¹. Ok. Thank you.

task usually assigned to the helpers and servants in the home or, if there aren’t any, the women of the household.

⁹ Here, ‘*sutho*’ is not actually a word. It has been combined with ‘*jutho*’ to make ‘*jutho*’ seem plural. Nepalis have a habit of rhyming a word which they want to emphasize as being plural, or indicating similar things like that word, with a ‘s’ sound in front.

¹⁰ The literal meaning of ‘*bujhera*’ is ‘to understand’. However, in this case this meaning applies only to a certain extent. In this context, ‘*bujhera*’ means to ask around and understand, rather than to just understand. So the speaker is saying that these women should ask around in organizations and try to know and understand about them and try to know if they know people who are related to these organizations. This word is mainly used because a lot of networking and personal contact is needed in Nepal to be sure of a job or of an organization before you get into it.

¹¹ In this context, the word ‘*Hajur*’ is used to address, and with that acknowledge, that the speaker is an elder. In other contexts, this word can also be used to ask a person to repeat what they are saying in a formal way or to imply that you are listening to what a speaker is saying, especially if you’re talking to a person older than you.

Soni: Thank you to you too.

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