

GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION: THEORY VS REALITY

Written by Shivi Verma

BA LLB 3rd year student, Indore Institute of law

ABSTRACT

Education is considered as an important instrument in human life as well as in growth of the nation. It reduces the poverty, gender inequality and social injustice in the society and provides opportunities to the weaker section of the society. In India, even after the so many years of independence, large disparities can be seen in education among all the groups of the society, region and among the gender. The biggest problem faced in education system is the female education, as people discriminate between the men and women to provide education. Despite of laws made in Indian constitution to eradicate the gender discrimination between the men and women in society as well as in education system, India still face the problem. The main purpose of this research paper is to show the issues and challenges related to the gender discrimination in Indian education system.

INTRODUCTION

In today's world if we look around our society, great effort have been made to improve the condition of gender equality. Gender equality is a human right. Women are entitled to live with dignity and freedom from fear which they face in the society. Gender equality is achieved only when the women and men enjoy the same rights and opportunities in the society including economic participation and decision making.

According to UNICEF, women and men, boys and girls, enjoy the same rights and resources and opportunities and protection. It is not required that the boys and girls or women and men be the same or exactly alike.

If we talk about India, during the ancient Vedic period, women use to enjoy equal status with men in all aspects of the life. The conquest of Mughal in India brought change in the Indian society. The position of Indian women starts to deteriorate from this period. During the British Raj, many reforms can be seen in India. Reformers such as Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra vidyasagar and many others brought changes in Indian society. Peary charan sarkar a former student of hindu college, Calcutta and a member of "young Bengal" setup the first free school for girls in India in 1847 in Calcutta.

After the Independence, women now participate in areas such as education, politics, media, art and culture, technology etc.

Feminist activism in India gained momentum in the late 1970s and one of first of the case was brought by such group at national level was the rape case of Mathura which led to the wide protest in the nation and forced the government to amend the evidence act, the criminal procedure code and the Indian Penal Code. Such group also came together and fought for other such issues like female infanticide, gender bias, women's health, safety and literacy. The constitution of India provides certain provisions for the equality of the women.

Despite of such great changes India have witness in past years to eradicate the gender biasness, still there are certain aspects present in the society which still lead to gender inequality.

PROVISIONS FOR WOMEN IN INDIAN CONSTITUTION

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian constitution in its preamble, fundamental rights, directive principle and fundamental duties. The constitution of India not only talks about the equality but also directs the state to adopt such measures and policies which help in promoting the women empowerment.

India has also ratified itself in CEDAW convention which helps in promoting the rights of the women in India.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

The constitution of India provides certain provisions for the women which are as follows:

- Equality before law (article 14).
- State to not to discriminate against anyone on the basis of sex, race, caste, religion, place of birth etc. (article 15).
- State shall make provisions for women and children [article 15(3)].
- Equality of opportunity in all the matters relating to the employment or appointments (article 16).
- State shall make policies for equal rights of livelihood and equal remuneration for both men and women [article 39(a) and article 39(d)].
- To promote justice and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation scheme to ensure that justice is not denied to any citizen by the reason of economic or other disabilities (article 39 A).
- State shall provide education and economic interest in the weaker section of the society to protect from social injustice and exploitation (article 46).
- State shall raise the standard of living and level of nutrition of its people (article 47).
- To promote the harmony and the spirit of brotherhood amongst all the people of India [article 51(a) (e)].
- Not less than one third of the total number of the seat to be fulfilled by the direct election of panchayat to be reserved for the women [article 243D (3)].

- Not less than one third number of offices of the chairperson in the panchayat to be reserved for women [article 243 D (4)].
- Not less than one third number of the seats to be filled by the direct election in every municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by the rotation to different constituencies in a municipality [article 243T (3)].
- Reservation of offices of chairperson in municipalities for the scheduled castes, the schedule tribes and women in such manner as the legislature of a state may by law provide [article 243 T (4)].

CONCEPT OF GENDER INEQUALITY

Despite of laws mentioned above in Indian Constitution still Indians celebrate the birth of the boys and keep mute on the birth of a girl child. We can look into the history that daughters are killed at or before their birth, for love of a male child and if not killed her life is discriminated in the various ways.

Gender inequality can be defined as the discrimination against the women on the basis of their sex. The patriarchal system in the society is the basis of gender discrimination in the society.

Under patriarchal system of society men exploit the women on the name of religious belief and tradition, whether it is Hindu, Muslim, or Christian or any other religion.

According to Manu “it is supposed that women are in the custody of their father till they married, in the custody of their husband when married and in old age or as widow, under the custody of her son. In no circumstances she is allowed to assert herself independently”.

The condition mentioned by the Manu is still continued in the present society and the most unfortunate part in our society of gender inequality is that the women too have accepted their subordinate position to men and are part of the same patriarchal society.

FEMALE EDUCATION IN INDIA

Right to education is a human right for both men and women, but if we look around our society we can witness that people give more priority to men in education than women. If we look into the past history of India, women were treated equal to men and were educated like men. The foreign rule in India, specially, the Mughal period had adversely affected the Indian women progress by confining them into the four wall of their home.

During the British period the progress of women started to rise, where they started to step outside of their home went to foreign missionaries who provided education service to them.

Several campaigns were started in India for women education. To break the tradition Savitribai Phule was an important figure who brought education reform in India. She stood up against injustice and fought hard for women's right. Savitri Phule became a teacher and founded first school for women in Pune.

After the Second World War, organization such as UN and UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) has made progress to fight the gender inequality through education.

To improve education in India, government of India inserted article 21-A in the constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education to the children between the age group of six to fourteen years as a fundamental right.

PRESENT SENARIO OF FEMALE EDUCATION IN INDIA

TABLE 1: *Gender Inequality in Education*

INSTITUTE	% OF MALE STUDENT	% OF FEMALE STUDENT	TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENT
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE, BENGALURU	83.89%	16.10%	1310
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, MADRAS	83.94%	16.05%	6373

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY,BOMBAY	87.92%	12.07%	6625
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY,DELHI	85.72%	14.27%	5666
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY,KHARAGPUR	87.45%	12.54%	8803
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY,KANPUR	89.14%	10.85%	5083
BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY,VARANASI	63.81%	36.18%	23543
ANNA UNIVERSITY,CHENNAI	55.29%	44.70%	13970
NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY,BENGALURU	55.25%	44.74%	476
NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY,DELHI	51.90%	48.09%	447
NALSAR,HYDERABAD	54.28%	45.71%	549
NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY,JODHPUR	54.94%	45.05%	637
NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY,LUCKNOW	59.28%	40.71%	872
ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCE,NEW DELHI	52.42%	47.57%	1528
POST GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH, CHANDIGARH	45.82%	54.17%	1246
CHRISTIAN MEDICAL COLLEGE, VELLORE	44.84%	55.15%	990
KASTURBA MEDICAL COLLEGE, MANIPAL	48.46%	51.53%	1917

KING GEORGE MEDICAL COLLEGE, LUCKNOW	56.08%	43.91%	2382
BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY, VARANASI	52.08%	47.91%	2012
JAWAHARLAL INSTITUTE OF POST GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH, PUDUCHERRY	57.85%	42.14%	999

In the above given table 1: The given names of the institutions in the above table are the top educational institution of India. In the table above given we can witness that in two medical institutes the ratio of female is higher than the male which shows that there is progress in bridging gender eradication but still if we look overall percentage, the male ratio is still higher than the female ratio.

According to the 2011 census the literacy rate in India is 74%. The male literacy rate is 82.14% and female literacy rate is 65.46%. Therefore, it can be said that despite of laws in India in respect of the gender equality, India still face the problem of gender discrimination.

WHY INDIA IS LAGGING BEHIND IN WOMEN EDUCATION?

There are several causes why India is lagging behind in women education which are as follows:

- Biological
- Socio cultural
- Economic
- Educational
- Personal and psychology
- Adherence to traditional gender role.

BIOLOGICAL CAUSES

Men and women differ biologically and physically, hence the biological difference lead to gender discrimination. When a woman gives birth to a child she is given maternity leave for 3 to 6 moths so that she can look after her health and her child, just because of this reason people discriminate and think that a woman is only to conceive a child and look after her husband.

SOCIOCULTURE CAUSES

The main reason why people avoid having a daughter is that she considered as Prayadhan, because parents take care of the plant, grow it, but when the flower blooms it is plucked by someone else.

A girl has no opportunity to take care of her parents during old age, while a son is expected to care of his parents, bear their responsibility, financially and socially and finally after the death of the parents' son is expected to give mukhagni and make kriyas, while a girl is not entitled to perform such things.

I have heard from many people that girls are burden because it is difficult to get good bride groom without enough dowry, these are the true facts prevalent in the society even today and unless these customs are not changed and girls are not given opportunities to serve their parents before and after death, discrimination on this ground will not end.

ECONOMIC CAUSE

If we look in our society most of the women are depended on men. Since they had no education and no education and expertise to do jobs outside and since men did not allow those who were suitable for jobs, women become financially weak and become engaged in domestic work for which they were never paid. Their economic dependencies on male made them silent and obliged to men. We often read news where husbands brutally beat their wife and wife keep mum as they take care of their wife financially.

Keeping such thing in mind now government in some states provides finance to the women through reservations.

EDUCATIONAL CAUSES

Uneducated, illiterate women lack knowledge, to face challenges of life and to overcome the disadvantages, disabilities of life and to be free from discrimination women should be educated.

To make the life better, women must be educated, women empowerment is possible only when women becomes educated. Empowerment means improvement in political, financial position, occupational status, etc. of women.

LOW LEVEL OF ASPIRATION

A study by Mohanty shows that women show low level of aspiration than males for which they are not able to utilize their inner potentialities and hence, considered inferior to men. The cause of low level of aspiration of women may be assigned to the socio cultural toward women. From the moment when a girl is born they are treated inferior to men and they are told in their everyday life that they are inferior to men. They are only to cook and feed the family, give birth to children and take care of them. Even if a girl studies very well in rural areas they are not provided higher education. Due to such reasons it is obvious that women shall have low of aspiration.

Other reasons

There are some other reasons which leads to gender discrimination in education system are:

- Lack of safety
- Poverty
- Lack of toilets
- Pre marriage relation

IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN EDUCATION

An underdeveloped country cannot grow without proper education of women. Women play very important role in shaping the family and society of a country. In order to make democracy successful in country women education is necessary with men education.

The importance of women education is as follow:

- **GENDER EQUALITY:** Woman is considered in weaker section of the society. Therefore, education will fill the gap between the men and women in the society.
- **ECONOMIC PRODUCTIVITY:** Educating women with men will not only show equality in the society but also increase GDP of the country.
- **REDUCTION IN INFANT MORALITY** Educating women will improve decision making regarding to her health as well as to her family. It will help to reduce the infant mortality rate.
- **RISE THE STANDARD OF LIVING** Education will improve chances of employment for women and will raise the standard of living of her as well as her family.
- **WOMEN EMPOWERMENT** Education also helps in women empowerment. Educated women have knowledge about their rights in a country, which helps to fight the restrictions against them in the society.
- **STRENGTHENING OF DEMOCRACY** Education will create social awareness among the women which will increase their participation in the politics which will help in strengthen the democracy in India.
- **DIGNITY AND HONOR** Educated women are now looked with dignity and honor in the society and act as inspiration for others to become educate.

SCHEMES OF GOVERNMENT TO ENCOURAGE WOMEN EDUCATION

Schemes established by the government of India are as follows:

- **RIGHT TO EDUCATION:** Right to education is a fundamental right which provides free and compulsory education to the children between 6 to 14 years old children.
- **NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR EDUCATION OF GIRLS AT ELEMENTRY LEVEL:**
This programme focuses on girls in the village who are school dropout by giving special attention to weak girls. This programme focuses on the enrolment and attendance of the girls.
- **RASHTIYA MADHYAMIK SHIKSHA ABHIYAN:**
It provides infrastructure to girl's hostel for secondary education.
- **BETI PADHAO BETI BACHAO YOJNA :**
The Prime Minister of India launched an initiative known as beti bachao beti padhao yojna to educate girls.

SUGGESTIONS TO PROMOTE FEAMLE EDUCATION

- To promote female education in India government must make education free, granting concession in the form scholarships to poor and meritorious girl students.
- Adjusting the timing and vacation to suit local needs and conditions.
- Appointment of inspecting officer to inspect the education and administration in schools.
- Shift system where co-education of male and female is not acceptable.
- Establishment of nursery and preprimary schools.
- Proper accommodation to teachers and students, particularly in rural areas.
- Establishing private schools.

CONCLUSION

From the above paragraphs and percentages here the researcher would like to conclude that in spite of laws made on equality for men and women, India still faces the gender discrimination problem. Though the government of India has established several schemes and laws to eradicate the gender discrimination, it can be witnessed that the speed for bridging the gap between the male and women is very low. The only way to eradicate such problem, with the help of government, society should also take steps to implement the schemes provided by the government.

