

CHAPTER - I



Introduction



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1.1 Introduction :

We, the People of India, having solemnly revolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens :

JUSTICE, Social, economic and politic;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity;

and to promote among them all;

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation;

This is the preamble of the constitution of India.

The preamble guarantees to all the citizens of India justice, social economic and political, liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; equality of status and of opportunity; and, to promote among them all fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the integrity of the nation.

Where do women of India stand in this framework? Do they receive justice? Do they have liberty ? Do they enjoy dignity as individuals? Are they enjoying equality?

Theoretically, all these questions can be answered in affirmative but the reality is far behind.

The overall social context in which a girl lives from womb to tomb is filled with gender bias. Gender bias can be defined as "Inclination of mind on the basis of the sex of a child without due examination". Hence the Gender bias which exists at parental home, community level, learning institutions, world of work, matrimonial home, school environment, rather all around, a girl child puts unsurmountable hurdles in her physical, emotional, social, educational, economical and even spiritual development. As a result she is not able to develop her potentialities to the desired extent. As consequence to it she is invariably on unequal footings with the boys of her age and is often in a disadvantaged position to take full benefit of the various programmes introduced by the government for the welfare and educational development of the children.

Gender asymmetry is a universal fact of life. In many societies around the world, women are discriminated against by law and by custom, rendering them among the vulnerable and disadvantaged social groups. As papnek puts it, "*Gender differences, based on the social construction of the biological sex distinctions, are one of the great 'fault lines' of societies - those marks of difference among categories of persons that govern the allocation of power, authority and resources.*" What then gender is? Gender is a cultural construct of sex roles, a definition of "masculine" and "feminine" and of the prerogatives of male and female. Gender commonly is a function of power relations and the social organisation of inequality. Feminist Scholar define gender as the social organisation of sexual difference, or a system of unequal relationship between the sexes.

What perpetuates gender inequality? Gender discrimination or biases are not accidental or a fact of nature but are reproduced institutionally. One of the most important institutions is the school. Gender discrimination every where. When we dress a girl child in soft colours and frilly clothes, buy a male child a gun, when we admonish girls for behaving like boys, or tease boys for being timid 'like girls', we are doing gender discrimination. That is, we are allocating to the male and female sexes specific and distinctive attributes and roles. We also impose different sets of expectations on them. More important we seem to imply that these attributes and roles may not be easily exchanged.

As we grow up, ideas of masculinity and femininity become central to the way we think about ourselves. Many of us actively reject interests which are recognize as untypical of our sex. girls do not really fight to play games, or engage in physically strenuous activity. Neither do boys appear eager to cooking or interests themselves in the details of housework and care of children.

Various research studies reveal that girls in general are not treated at par with the boys of their age groups. This phenomenon pervades in the overall social set up where they are born, grow, study, work and live their lives. This type of discriminating behaviour, specifically on the social and educational fronts puts a lot of hindrances in the proper development of their potentialities.

We observe many differences among girls and boys in the home, in the street, inside the classroom, in the play-field, during the school recess. For instance, in general, boys are active, playful, confident,

bold, demanding, loud, at times rough, rowdy aggressive and fighting, intimidating and difficult to control.

Girls are passive, gentle, quiet, accepting, often shy, diffident, timid, less communicative, easily intimidated, accepting commands unquestioningly, more compliant and relatively easy to control.

Clause no. 14 of the constitution of India states that all the citizens are equal before the law and the clause no. 15 states that in no condition there should be discrimination among the citizens of India. The constitution has tried its level best to keep the status of the women equal to that of men. Yet the present situation is not so very hopeful for two reasons, her ignorance and the lack of knowledge of the clause among the people. This leads to deteriorated status of the women everywhere. There are seven areas of discrimination; malnutrition, poor health, lack of education, over work, mistreatment, unskilled and powerlessness. Which stand so true, perhaps this is the status of women today.

Till now different educational commissions and policies talked about the present condition of Indian woman and accordingly suggested strategies and measures to improve it. So, it is very important to have a look on the recommendations of the various educational commissions and policies. Also, it is the most important to go through the constitutional provisions suggested in the constitution of India.

The Constitutional Guarantees :

The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women and forbids any discrimination based on religion, race, caste or sex but also empowers the state to practice protective discrimination in favour of women.

The Indian State does prohibit discrimination against any citizen, on the grounds of religion, caste, sex or place of birth (Article - 15) and has taken measures to protect the interest of women and children. The fundamental rights (and the directive principles) of state policy specifically addressing women are given below -

Fundamental Rights :

Article - 14 : Confers on men and women equal rights and opportunities in the political, economic and social spheres.

Article - 15 : Prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste and sex.

Article - 15 (3): Makes a special provision enabling the state to make affirmative discrimination in favour of women.

Article-15 (A)(e): Imposes a fundamental duty on every citizen to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

Article- 16 Provides for equality of opportunities in matters of public appointment for all children.

Universal declaration of Human rights (1948) proclaimed childhood is entitled to special care and assistance. The convention on the rights of the child was adopted by the United Nations general assembly on 20 November 1989 and came into force after the world summit on children 29-30 September 1990. Non-discrimination the key principle - a child to enjoy all rights regardless of his / her parents' or legal guardians' race, colour, sex, language, religion etc. The state parties are to -

- ensure that education is directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential; developing in them respect for human rights and fundamental freedom; preparing children for responsible life in a free society in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance equality of sexes (Article 29).

The report of the committee on status of women towards equality, 1974, revealed a declining proportion of women in the population, higher female mortality and poor representation of women in political process.

The national perspective plan for women (1988-2000) outlines the national gender agenda till the turn of the century with a strong focus on rural and disadvantaged women.

The National Policy on Education 1968 :

The policy stated that the education of girls should receive emphasis because it accelerates social transformation and emphasized the equality of educational opportunities for all sections of population. The national policy on education came soon after the United Nations Development Decade for Women (1985-95) and reflected adequately the national aspirations for the removal of all disparities of caste, of sex, of region, and to carry basic education to all sections of society. The Programme of Action (POA) - 1992 laid down important parameters of women's empowerment such as : enhancing self-esteem and self-confidence of women, developing the ability to think critically, ensuring equal participation in development process etc.

The National Policy on Education (1986) and its programme of action (POA) :

Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In order to neutralize the accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well-conceived edge in favour of women. The national educational system will play positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women. It will foster the development of new values through redesigned curricula, textbooks, the training and orientation of teachers, decision makers and administrators, and the active involvement of educational institutions. Womens' studied will be promoted as a part of various educational institutions. Women's studies will be promoted as a part of various courses and educational institution encouraged to take up active programmes to further women's development.

The national policy for the empowerment of women, 2001 :

The empowerment of women is a process, which eventually leads to change. It encompasses a progression from one state (gender inequality) to another (gender equality) in which women must act as significant agents of change rather than merely act as its recipients. Empowering women does not imply snatching power from men but sharing power equally for total development. Moreover no development is complete until it involves equally both men and women. But gender inequality continues to manifest itself in various forms. Beginning with female infanticide, denial of education and health care rights to the girl child, to denial of property rights to women and violence at home and outside, women are subjected to deep rooted discrimination. Recognizing the prevalence of gender discrimination and inequality at all levels of society the

government of India has formulated the national policy for empowerment of women, 2001 to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.

1.2 Need and Justification :

Classroom environment plays a crucial role in the around development of children. It is a fact that girls around development is not a par with that of boys. Many a times, there is visible gender bias in the classroom with regard to teaching - learning process, teaching - learning material, teacher-pupil interaction and so on. This turns out to be hindrance to the around development of children. Therefore, it is necessary to examine what are the areas in which discrimination or gender bias takes place in the classroom practices.

1.3 Statement of the problem :

"A study of gender bias in classroom practices at elementary level".

1.4 Objectives of the Study :

The study proposes to find out the gender bias in classroom practices at elementary level. More precisely, the objectives of the study are :

- i) To find out different areas of inequality between sexes in the classroom.
- ii) To find out and analyze teachers' own biases and perceptions about gender roles.
- iii) To find out and analyze students' own biases and perceptions about gender roles.
- iv) To enhance self-esteem, self-confidence and a positive image of girl students by recognizing their contribution in the classroom

- v) To suggest certain strategies to overcome gender bias or inequality, if any, in the classroom environment.

1.5 Operational Definitions :

- i) **Gender Bias :** It implies discrimination based on gender among boys and girls and are treated with unequal prestige and dignity in all processes.
- ii) **Gender Friendliness:** It implies no discrimination based on gender among boys and girls and are treated with equal prestige and dignity in all processes.
- iii) **Curriculum :
Transaction** This term is operationally defined as the transaction of curricular objectives.
- iv) **Classroom Behaviour :** Classroom behaviour of the teacher refers to physical, emotional tone and attitude of the teacher in the classroom towards gender perception.
- v) **Classroom :
Practices** It stands for the teaching-learning process, teacher - pupil interaction, pupil-pupil interaction, pupil-material interaction. The accessibility of Teaching Learning Material and the overall atmosphere in the classroom.

1.6 Delimitations of the Study :

- i) The study is limited to four schools of Khargone district.
- ii) The population chosen is restricted to one class i.e. class VIII.
- iii) The population includes 200 students (100 boys and 100 girls) from all the four schools.
- iv) 50 teachers from the four schools were taken for the study.
- v) 20 classes were observed by the investigator.

