QUEST IN EDUCATION

Editorial

Major challenges posed by COVID19 pandemic is bringing new normal in the field of education marked by online learning and distance learning. Thought we need to maintain 'physical or body distance', there is great need for social solidarity.

In this issue, Dr. Frances Vaidya has brought out salient features of National Perspective Plan in Education, 2019.

An exhaustive and analytically rigorous research-based article by Dr. Meenu Anand titled, 'Gender and Schooling: A Feminist Perspective' is extremely important to create a gender sensitive society.

Critical evaluation of Total Literacy Mission with a gender lens **by** Dr. Judy Grace Andrews meets the demand of the day.

Digital divide has thrown out majority of children, especially girls from the marginalized sections out of schools and colleges due to the coronavirus pandemic. Dr. Sunayana J. Kadle discusses educational challenges of the marginalized girls during COVID 19 Pandemic

Review Article by Nikita Pathak of Festschrift in Honour of Professor R. Indira, a veteran feminist and women's studies expert touches all major contributions of the women's studies movement in India.

We request authors to send their original research-based articles and book reviews on issues concerning education. As Quest in Education publishes peer-reviewed articles, the authors should be ready to wait.

Due to a national lockdown in India because of the Corona Virus crisis, the print edition of Quest in Education is interrupted & only an online edition is appearing since April 2020.

Prof. Vibhuti Patel
Editor

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE PLAN IN EDUCATION, 2019

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This article focuses on the National Perspective Plan for Education. It will primarily look at the concept, importance and scope of National Perspective Plan. It will focus on the National Perspective Plan for Woman (1988-2000), National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001). It will also focus on the Gender Stereotypes, Gender discrimination in all spheres. It will include the Gender inequalities and suggest the role of family, school and mass media in reducing them.

Canvas of National Perspective Plan

A national perspective plan is a blueprint regarding the objectives and targets to be achieved by the nation in the long run. It is a long-term plan consisting of around 20- 25 years. It is a written document supported by necessary maps and diagrams providing the state government goals, policies, strategies and general programmes of the urban local authority regarding the socioeconomic development of the settlement under its governances. The basic purpose of a perspective plan is to provide a policy framework for further detailing, and it serves as a guide for the local authority in preparation of the development plan. A development plan is a statutory plan, approved and adopted by the local authority for implementation with the help of schemes and projects. Its proposals are precise and definite. A development Plan is prepared within the framework of the approved perspective plan. It is a medium-term comprehensive plan of 5 years. The purpose of this development plan is to furnish further required and important details and proposed actions in the form of strategies and physical proposals for various policies given in the perspective

plan depending upon the socio- economic needs, aspirations of the people, priorities and all available resources. No development plan can be adopted by the local authority until and unless it is conceived within the framework of the perspective plan which is already approved or in the process of being approved.

National Perspective Plan in Education

It is a long-term planning of an institution, organization or nation covering all the aspects. It covers all levels- primary to higher or lower to upper levels. It includes all the stake holders- students, teachers, parents, support staff and administrators. It encompasses all activities- curricular, co-curricular, evaluation, in-service training, administrative works. It covers all aspects- educational, administrative, practical, financial, ethical, and infrastructural. The planning is done well in advance, in detail, comprehensive, based on long term policies.

Scope of National Perspective Plan

It covers all the aspects of socio-economic and spatial developmental goals, policies and important issues relating to all urban activities that have require land for their desired functioning. It also encompasses all long- term policies which includes infrastructural development and resource mobilization necessary to enhance the urban activities. Minimization of conflicts between the environmental protection and urban development is taken care off. It also includes assessment of current issues, priorities, prospects, and upcoming proposals for the development of the nation including education, employment, housing, infrastructure and matters like environment, conservation, and ecology. The implement strategies and efficient system of monitoring and review is also included in its scope. Depending on the urgencies, a framework can be prepared withing the framework of the perspective plan and covering the area do jurisdiction of the local authority.

Importance of National Perspective Plan

A national perspective plan is a very vital document for the proper functioning and development of a nation. It is particularly important as it provides a policy framework for the present and further development. It indicates the areas that require improvements. It serves as pointers in formulating the operational targets too. It provides opportunities to incorporate the needs and development aspiration of the nation.

There were several perspective plans made like the National Plan Of Action For Women (NPA) 1976, Sharam Shakt 1988, The National Nutritional Policy (NNP)1993, The National Plan And Action For The Girl Child (NPA) 1991-2000, National Commission For Women's Act (New) 1990, National Policy For The Empowerment Of Women (2001), National Policy of Education (2019).

National Perspective Plan For Women (1988-2000)

The National Perspective plan for Women aimed to promote holistic perspective to the development of women by Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development. This was a particularly important document promising to free Indian Women form all forms of social oppression. It was put together by a 14-member core group, constituted in 1987 and headed by Margaret Alva, who was at that time the Minister of state for women, youth affairs and sport. The National Perspective Plan made 353 far-reaching recommendations which included a uniform civil code, property rights to women, reservation of seats for women in elected bodies, banning of sex- determination tests, and making harassment of wives for dowry as a ground for seeking divorce. It also spoke about encouraging industrialisation of rural areas which mainly aimed at giving employment opportunities for women, giving them credit, and setting up a Central maternity benefit fund. This plan pays special attention to the rural women who suffer from double discrimination.

Recommendations of the National Perspective Plan

- Education to girls should be given priority and prepare them to contribute effectively to the socio-economic development of the country

- need for a strong inter-ministerial coordination and monitoring body in the Department of Women and Child Development

- strong need to eliminate all forms of discrimination in employment specially to eliminate wage differentials between men and women

- Planning Commission and all ministries and government departments must have a women's cell**.**

- enforcement mechanism including police, judiciary and other components need to be reviewed, sensitized and strengthened to provide equality and justice

- change the attitudes towards women and girls and to raise the social consciousness of the country,

- effectively secure participation of women in decision-making process at National, State and Local levels.

The National perspective plan focussed giving empowerment to women in many aspects. Attempts have been made to see that women are involved socially and economically in the development of the nation. However, attempts have not been achieved to the maximum.

National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001)

The specific objectives of national policies particularly of rural folk on empowerment of women in India were
- Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential

- The de-jure and de-facto enjoyments of all human rights and fundamental freedom by women on equal basis with men in all political, economic, social, cultural and civil spheres.

- Equal access to participation and decision making of women in social political and economic life of the nation.

- Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organizations.

- Changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women.

- Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child.

- Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organizations

With all the perspective plan recommended for women we still find inequalities existing in the nation till date. However, there has been changes also seen in the status of women as compared to the older times in all areas which include education, employment etc. However, there is still more to be achieved.

"We are convinced that Women's Rights are Human Rights." (Article 14, Beijing Declaration1995). Yet, women still face a lot of challenges although the principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles.The constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of Women.

Inequality: Gender, Caste And Class

The most striking inequality in Indian society is based on gender and caste. The existence of the four varnas in ancient times, led to inequality between the upper and lower caste. Only the upper caste enjoyed many rights. The lower caste got some rights and the worst sufferers were the lowest caste or the Shudras. However, in the upper caste there was gender discrimination. Women were not given any rights. Men took all the decisions. Upper caste women were denied the right of gainful employment opportunities outside their home. The women of the lowest caste, however, were employed due to their economic conditions.

Gender Stereotype

Gender stereotype has been and is still existing to a large extent in Indian society. Girls are supposed to be wearing pink whereas the blue colour represents boys. For birthday parties, girls are gifted with dolls whereas boys are given guns as birthday gifts. Girls are meant to be doing all the household chores and boys doing so called manly jobs and sit and get served by the female of the house. Girls are supposed to be obedient, silent, and docile and if the boys cry, it is not accepted by the society. They were decision makers, so they are to behave as tough and strong.

Gender Discrimination

Gender discrimination is seen in all aspects of life be it domestic chores, health care demands, domestic violence and sexual harassment. The women must do all the household chores. There is no help from the men as they feel it is not their job. They sit at the table to be served by the women. About health aspect, more attention is given to health of a man rather than a woman. Many women neglect their own health and are not open to the members of the family if they are suffering. The women in the rural areas, deliver in their own homes under unhygienic conditions and unsterilized equipment's leading to further health issues which could be detrimental to both the child and the mother. Women in the urban areas, often face health

issues due to erratic lifestyle and long hours of work. They neglect their health, and this could lead to further complications. Women too face discrimination at workplace. They face glass ceiling challenges. They often face dejection and not promoted just because of they are referred to as a weaker section of the society.

Role of Family in Gender Sensitization

Family plays an integral part in gender sensitization. While doing the household chores, the members of the family must include both the girl as well as the boy so that at an early age, they do not make a distinction of the household chores based on gender. The boys must be included in helping their mother with the cooking. Both must be included in the decision-making process. Members of the family must realize that all the woman of the house must be treated with due respect be it grandmother, mother, wife or the daughter of the house. Once in a way, the women can be given a day off and all the men of the house can do the cooking. This will go a long way in bringing about equality and gender stereo typing can be reduced to a great extent.

Role of school in Nurturing Sensitivity- Proactive Intervention

School is the second home of the students and this is the best place to sensitize the children based on gender. There should be not gender biasness seen in the school. Both the boys and girls must be equally treated. School play a vital role in fostering gender equality through the curricular and co co curricular activities. Programmes in school should be arranged in such a way that directly or indirectly speaks volumes of gender equality awareness. Speakers can be called to talk on gender issues. Through drama, role plays, discussion, paper reading sessions, children are made aware of gender equality.

Role of Mass Media Towards Gender Sensitization

The mass media plays an influencing role towards gender sensitization. Currently the women are portrait as weaker section, incompetent and less important through the daily soaps on the TV, through articles in the newspaper etc. The advertisement portrays women as object of lust. This has an impact on the people, and they tend to behave in that particular manner. If the mass media change this perception of women and portray them as independent, confident and capable, the scenario of the perception of people towards woman will change.

Online Platforms, Distance Learning will also go a long way in bringing about gender equality and sensitization through education. The women should have access to education or any form of learning anywhere, anyhow, anytime and anyplace. Education should be able to reach to the unreached. Women in the remotest village must be educated through online platforms. Distance learning can help to achieve women education. If all the women get some form of education be it formal or skilled, they will thus become empowered and an asset to the country.

Conclusion:

The State should play a leading role in education, not market. Government expenditure should increase up to 6% of gross domestic product as per the United Nation directives. Every measure should be taken to see that the recommendations as suggested by the National Perspective Plan for Education must be fulfilled to the maximum. If the nation must progress it is imperative that the Women of the nation too must play a leading role and be shoulder to shoulder with men.

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To safeguard democracy, the people must have keen sense of independence, self-respect and their oneness.

M.K. Gandhi, Memorial of Mahatma Gandhi, p. 339

GENDER AND SCHOOLING: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

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Gender is deeply embedded within the psychosocial rubric of the societal institutions. In addition to family, the school system as a primary agent of socialisation, plays an imperative role in imparting and reinforcing gendered identities to the children who have impressionable minds. The current paper locates the role of schools as progressive institutions of society and also reiterates various government programs and policies to promote gender equality in education. It also attempts to unveil various school practices through which cultural ideas and philosophies based on gender may get reproduced and maintained through overt as well as covert means among girls and boys. The paper concludes with few suggestive areas for mainstreaming gender in the school system.

Introduction

"Women are not born, they are made" (Simone de Beauvoir)

The creation of a man or a woman is a constantly evolving process that commences even before a child is born. There are many institutions that contribute to the socialization process– family, community, media, religion, and other institutions and most importantly, the schools. The culturally determined gender beliefs define rights and responsibilities and what is 'apposite' behaviour for women and men through social institutions. They also influence access to and control over resources, and participation in decision-making.

"The sex/gender distinction has always been essential to feminist scholarship, as what the term 'gender' uncovered was a vast and

intellectually fertile domain" (Anand, 2019). Gender and also sex, are made through complex social and technical manipulations that

naturalize some while abjecting others (Enke, 2012). "Sex is a system of biological reproduction, a matter of natural fact. Gender, by contrast, is a culturally constructed role" (Anand, 2019). Thus, sex is a matter of nature, gender of nurture. In other words, gender is a socio-cultural definition that we give to children. While nature makes male/ female; society makes us feminine & masculine; it is gender that determines attitudes, behaviours, personality traits, roles & responsibilities. A girl from a noticeably young age is encouraged to be beautiful, caring, nurturing, shy, sacrificing, sensitive, emotional, quiet, tolerant, and dependent. Boys are from early on trained to be brave, smart, rational, strong, assertive, outgoing, aggressive, tough, dominating, and independent. Boys are often told not to cry and thus they grow up, bottling up their emotions.

"Gender norms are, therefore, the sets of rules for what is appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour in a given cultural context. The collections of gender norms are what make up a sex role, a set of expectations about how someone labelled a man, or someone labelled a woman should behave. The way in which being feminine or masculine, a woman or a man, becomes an internalized part of the way one thinks about ourselves and engrains one's gender identity" (Anand, 2019).

Role of Social institutions in gender socialisation

Gender is deeply embedded within the psychosocial rubric of the societal institutions, starting from the family, community, schools, colleges/ universities, media, religion, and other institutions. "Doing gender renders the social arrangements based on sex category accountable as 'normal and natural', that is, legitimate ways of organizing social life. Differences between women and men that are created by this process can then be portrayed as fundamental and enduring dispositions. In this light, the institutional arrangements of a society can be seen as responsive to the differences-the social order being merely an accommodation to the natural order. Thus if, in doing

gender, men are also doing dominance and women are doing deference" (Goffman, 1967). The traditionally determined gender ideologies define rights and responsibilities and what is 'suitable' behaviour for women and men be means of social institutions. These in turn, impact, and control access to and control over resources, and involvement in decision-making by men and women. These gendered ideologies often reinforce male power and the idea of women's inferiority. During their interactions with significant others and through social institutions, children acquire a sense of self and begin to see themselves and what they do in relation to the people around them. Through social interactions during the course of socialization, they become gendered as they learn societal messages about the socially acceptable and appropriate behaviours for men and women.

Role of Schools in Socialisation

Schools are major contexts for gender socialization (Bigler, 2013). After family, school is a social system to which children belong to for about twelve to fourteen years and these are the most formative years of their lives. The values imbibed during this period have an impact on their growing attitudes and overall personality. School is perceived as a primary social system responsible for socialization of girls and boys. It plays a particularly important role in imparting and reinforcing gendered identities to the children who have impressionable minds. Schools are sites where cultural practices are replicated and maintained as well as contested. The sexism of the school curriculum both overt as well as covert, influences discrimination between girls and boys in very subtle ways.

It is also indeed important to remember that schools are a part of the larger society, which is patriarchal in nature. Therefore, one needs to remember that gender bias is endemic to the system. It enters the schools via adults, who have adopted and developed attitudes through early socialization practices. Perceived notions of gender bias and stereotyped images continue to get perpetuated within classrooms through classroom processes and outside classroom through school practices. Educational institutions reflect and reinforce the social and

cultural differentiation between boys and girls in various ways (Anand, 2007).

Gender issues in education have gained focus in the policies and programmes of India as the country has demonstrated commitment in bridging the gender gaps in education at the national as well as international level. Let us briefly discuss about India's policies and programs with respect to gender and education.

India's Commitments towards gender and education: Few Snapshots

On the national front, "India has given considerable emphasis to showing more commitment towards gender equality generally and particularly gender concerns in education. Indian Constitution, with some notable amendments, gives significant attention to education, including gender mainstreaming. Both the Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy within the Constitution promise and grant equality to women in all spheres of life, while recognising that much inequality remains, and further engagement is needed. The Constitution is clearly a core document, whose provisions are talked about in Indian classrooms. The Constitution gives considerable emphasis to education. Article 45 enjoins the States to provide for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years irrespective of their sex." The Government of India in its 86th constitutional amendment of 2002 created Article 21-A, that seeks to provide free and compulsory education to all children aged 6 to 14 years 'in such manner as the State may, by law, determine' (Anand, 2018).

Furthermore, India has also initiated a variety of progressive initiatives in the last few decades - residential schools for girls (*Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas*), universal mid-day school meals – to expand the access and quality of basic education coverage, especially for girls, Female Literacy Mission (*Saakshar Bharat Mission*), the *Shiksha Karmi Project* and *Lok Jumbish Project* in various states. *Mahila Samakhya*, Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) of the Madhya Pradesh government, the bridge programmes of

Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, the District Primary Education Project (DPEP) are some attempts in the direction. Also, major "government programmes like the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* ('Education for All Movement', launched in 2001–2) and the National Plan of Action for Children of 2005 indicate various government efforts to achieve better schooling and more progress towards gender equality (Kumar, 2006). These programmes focus on providing free textbooks for girls, construction of toilets especially for girls and monitoring the quality of education. India also had a very comprehensive earlier National Policy on Education in 1986 and a revised Programme of Action in 1992. The government's Position Paper on 'Gender Issues in Education' as part of the National Curriculum Framework of 2005 clearly recognised gender as a cross-cutting issue. India's Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012–7) explicitly highlighted the need for special measures to reduce gender inequities and discrimination and proposed to take special measures for gender empowerment (Government of India, 2013). With the enactment of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act in 2009, government has displayed immense political will to integrate gender issues within the education system" (Anand, 2018).

On the international front, Gender equality is one of the six goals of the global Education for All campaign that was launched in the year 2000, when the countries of the world agreed to "eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieve gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality". According to the Human Development Report 2019, India is currently at the 129th rank of the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2019). In terms of the Gender Inequality Index, India has a value of 0.501, ranking it 122 out of 162 countries.

Furthermore, India is also a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1981), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC 1990). Education for All Goals reaffirmed in Dakar in 2000, that emphasized "a focus on gender equality in education within two of its six goals where all children, especially girls, would have access to and

complete free, compulsory primary education by 2005". It also aimed "to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieve gender equality in education by 2015".

India has been committed to meeting the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in 2001 and now working also towards Sustainable Development Goals where again there is thrust on gender and education in Goals 4 and 5.

After a broad analysis of the government policies on gender and education, let us highlight on the changing role of schools in the contemporary Indian scenario.

Schools as Progressive Institutions

A review and analysis of the available literature on gender and school education reveals that during the 1980s and early 1990s the focus of research studies rested primarily on the issues related to primary education such as enrollment of girls in schools, their retention, factors associated with their dropout rate. It was during the 1990s that a paradigm shift took place from primary to elementary education. This is also considered an extremely important phase due the stress in the education sector on the more qualitative aspects such as importance of teacher's attitudes, their expectations, teacher's behaviour towards boys and girls, parental motivations, aspirations etc. With the emphasis on Universalization of Elementary Education by 2010, the main focus of action shifted on improving the functioning of schools and enhancing the quality of their outcomes (Anand, 2014a).

In the current scenario, schools are today being looked at as progressive institutions that enable children learn values and ethics considered important for their overall personality development. With schooling being recognized as one key indicator of human development index, "schools also are looked at as '**corrective institutions'** that play a major role in re-socialization of the child who has already acquired some understanding of gender based roles,

behaviours, expectations from the his/her family" (Gandhi, 1995 as cited in Anand, 2014b).

Gender and School Practices: Few Areas for Introspection

Keeping in mind the greater significance of the role of school in the changing context, thrust on gender issues within the educational context, there is a need to understand and analyse the multifaceted school practices, policies, teacher's awareness, opinions and sensitivity and also, the overall school philosophy from a gender perspective. In other words, we need to understand the **'**culture**'** adopted by schools, to analyze whether the schools are extricating the girls from their low self-concepts- low self-esteem syndrome or are also working consciously to correct the macho, aggressive, over bearing self-concept of boys. This means that we need to go in-depth into the day to day practices, covert as well as overt ways of functioning of children, teachers and unveil the overall school practices from a gender lens. Some of the areas that need attention and probing for such an analysis are as follows:

A) CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Classrooms are microcosms of the larger society. It is a little society that exerts a powerful socializing influence on the children. In a classroom set up, children do multiple tasks- studying, playing, and taking part together in different classroom processes and activities. Classroom environment interacts with student's personal characteristics and affects their learning attitude and behaviour. Teacher often acts as the *leader* and the role model in class. Therefore, classroom processes are seen to have an impact on transmission of expected behaviours and traits from boys and girls. We need to explore the different classroom processes - sitting arrangement, allocation of roles and responsibilities and about class monitors.

- *Seating arrangement*: Seating arrangement in a co-educational classroom can be either segregated or mixed for boys and girls. Any sex-based differentiation in the seat arrangement would reflect gender bias in the classroom. In

many schools, I have seen seating since roll numbers, assignments allotted to children. Few also have a special consideration for the children with learning difficulties.

- *Role assignment*: Assignment of roles refers to the allocation of roles and responsibilities to children in the class. Children may be assigned different variety of roles in the class. These may include jobs like cleaning or decorating the class, arranging furniture, bringing chalk, wiping the blackboard, collection of notebooks, decorating the notice boards, discussing, and preparing for upcoming events, organizing classroom forums/ debates. We need to analyse the role assignments in the class to explore if girls and boys are being given differentiated responsibilities on a day to day basis in their classrooms.

- *Leadership roles*-The opportunities provided to children also need a gender-based analysis with respect to classroom leadership. E.g. teachers if they feel that girls are more responsible and obedient, may give class monitorship roles to girls. Boys on the other hand, if considered more restless, overactive, and non-conforming to the school norms; may be denied of such roles. In another scenario, there can also be situation where both girls and boys are monitors with a rationale that the girl monitor minds the girls and boy monitor minds the boys. Thus, leadership opportunities need to be probed in a classroom from a gender lens viz a viz provision of equal opportunities to both boys and girls.

B) ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Gender differentiation in academic performance of students refers to having preferences for boys and girls for scholastic achievements in certain specific subjects. We can assess the teachers' opinions on the performance of girls and boys in different disciplines- languages, social sciences, science, and mathematics. Teachers' opinions on the performance of boys and girls with respect to specific subjects can provide significant information.

C) REWARDS AND PUNISHMENT SYSTEMS

As teachers, we know the importance of rewards and punishment in shaping children's behaviours. "While applause and rewards motivate the children to perform better and aid in building their self-confidence; punishments deter them from indulging in misbehaviour and delinquency" (Anand, 2014b). Schools being the most significant agent of socialization after family, play a major role in inculcating among children the do's and don'ts with regards to acceptable and non-acceptable behaviours in society. An exploration of differentiation among boys and girls with respect to the system for rewards and punishments in the schools.

- *Rewards*-We need to study what kinds of rewards are used to appreciate and reinforce pro social and positive behaviour among children. Some rewards may include- clapping, verbal form of appreciation, children can also be given prizes, gifts, certificates, *points, grades*, special duties in the school (Anand, 2014b). Thus, we need to explore the gender differentiations if any in the system of rewards being adopted by the schoolteachers.

- *Punishments*- Punishments are a part and parcel of the disciplining process and aim to act as deterrents for inappropriate behaviours. We all know that corporal punishment has been under the Right to Education Act of 2009, but we are also aware that at many places, it still takes place in the form of children being beaten black and blue and getting harsh verbal remarks. Nature of punishments needs to be explored e.g. is there any gender biases with respect to disciplining of children. For the same offence, are both girls and boys being given same punishment? Are boys receiving much harsher punishment than girls?

- Common punishments that I have seen during my research include children "standing with raised hands, ears and hair getting pulled, making rounds of the school ground, slapping, hitting and being scolded publicly in the school assembly, being slapped by class monitor or female students from junior classes, beaten on head, hit with objects like key ring/scale/wood/stick/ duster etc" (Anand, 2014b).

- Innovative punishments are also seen being given to children in the schools e.g. children getting "complaint notes for parents in their school diary, referrals to school counsellor, issue of warnings, withdrawal of attention, deprivation of enjoyable activities like sports/ library, standing outside the class, getting additional homework, kneeling down and slapping" (Anand, 2014b).

- An analysis of rewards as well as punishments can reveal the gendered comparison about these being meted out to children. In many cases, boys may receive harsher punishments as compared to girls (Anand, 2010).

D) PROFESSIONAL ASPIRATIONS

- Professional aspirations play an influential role in motivating and guiding students to pursue their profession in accordance with one's interests and aptitude. By building an environment of self-discovery, self-confidence and constructive learning, teachers can play an influential role in encouraging children to explore and nurture hidden talents and formulate career goals.

- There is a tendency to associate certain professions with sex-based connotations. Professions like medicine, engineering, astronauts, plumbing, electrical work, business, nursing, armed forces, domestic work, call centre, journalism and so many other are often associated with men. Professions like nursing, teaching, secretarial

work is often related with women. Also, within specialised branches of certain professions, for example, within medicine, there can be gendered distinctions with respect to certain specialisations witnessing the presence of more male doctors (surgery, orthopaedists, cardiologists, urology, ENT etc) while few see a greater number of female doctors (gynaecology, dermatology, hospice and palliative medicine, medical genetics and genomics etc).

- We need to understand the gender-based preferences of teachers regarding how they associate various occupations as well as professions with girls and boys.

E) ART EDUCATION

Co-curricular activities form an integral part of the school curriculum. Such activities encourage the children to think, go beyond the obvious and apparent and encourage divergent thinking. Co-curricular activities greatly enhance the development of creative instincts among children and aid in personality development. Gender differentiation in co- curricular needs to be analyzed to explore any differentiation among boys and girls.

I have often seen that girls dominate in music, dance, sewing as these subjects were labelled as *girl's subjects*. Boys on the other hand are more active in drawing, painting, debates, and dramatics. Many boys who were in music were seen in Instrumental Music (Anand, 2010). We also need to appreciate newer and positive and progressive practices. Few government schools that I have seen, have made genuine and intentional efforts to involve girls and boys in non-stereotypical activities e.g. encouraging boys to take up meal planning that is considered as a female subject or engaging girls in National Cadet Corps. There are also a wide range of innovative activities offered by their schools like gift wrapping, clay modelling, instrumental as well as vocal music, debates, dramatics etc. that are not related with either sex. There is a need to encourage innovations to create a platform free from

sex-based nuances with respect to inculcating creativity among boys and girls.

F) HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Health and Physical Education needs to be analysed with respect to any gender-based differentiation being practiced by the schools among boys and girls. Games like hopscotch, athletics, *kho-kho*, badminton, *elastic, gallery, staapu* might be preferred for girls while boys usually played cricket, volleyball. In few schools, specific sports activities are offered to 'boys/ girls only' and these require greater attention.

G) ROLE OF TEACHERS

"The role of schoolteachers in a school system becomes critical as they play a highly influential role in the formation of attitudes, opinions, self-esteem and confidence among children. The manner in which the teacher interacts with the students, the kind of positive and negative reinforcements given, teaching methods adopted contribute a great deal in developing an internalised sense of discipline and moral values necessary for developing responsible citizenship among children" (Anand, 2014b). Thus, teachers' opinions as well as understanding needs deep introspection and research from a gender lens. Also, one needs to explore if they are receiving trainings (if any)? And, if gender is a part of those trainings?

H) CHILDREN'S OPINIONS

Children are the main stakeholders and their opinions need to be studied. Anand (2014a) found the children to be **more vocal, more articulate** as compared to teachers. They voiced "extremely gender-balanced standpoints and also questioned traditional norms and gendered expectations and shared about exploring their own dreams and aspirations irrespective of their sex. They cited female foeticide and infanticide, dowry demands and dowry-related deaths, lack of opportunities for girls to study, early marriage and stress on girls to adjust. Both girls and boys seemed very well aware of the preference

for males in larger society. The children also shunned many traditionally accepted ideas, for example, regarding the pressure on men to suppress their feelings and refrain from crying; most felt that anyone could and should cry. Despite their young age, they were highly aware about the importance of crying in relation to mental health" (Anand, 2018).

I) OVERLL SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

We also need to study the overall context of the school- the number of male and female teachers, infrastructural facilities e.g. separate toilet facilities for girls and also for female staff, the workload on male and female staff and the kind of workload assigned to them from a gendered lens. We also need to see if there is a dress code for staff in the school. Also, the celebration of festivals like *Rakshabandhan, Karvachauth* that actually reiterate gender in society.

Suggestions for Mainstreaming Gender in School Practices

- Ongoing gender sensitization workshops are needed for schoolteachers to bring about attitudinal changes. Teacher education can assist teachers to reflect on and overcome their biases. Thrust on gender in the Pre-service and in-service teacher trainings, and teacher education programs like Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and Basic Training Certificate (Sahni, 2018; Anand, 2014a).
- Workshops, training programmes, awareness generation sessions of different types (e.g. street plays, film shows, puppet shows, rallies etc) for different stakeholders-planners, managers, trainers, field level workers, parents, community leaders, government and non-government officials, police, judiciary.
- Gender may be added as a compulsory component in the in-service training of all teachers across all categories of schools
- There is a need to create a gender friendly social context within the classroom and bring a 'deliberate' change to adopt innovative strategies in order to do away with the stereotypical

compartmentalization of boys and girls into two separate categories.

- Every attempt may be made by schools to ensure that each and every art education activity is made available to all children irrespective of their sex
- Special efforts may be taken for recruitment of female sports instructors by all schools to promote women as role models for taking up sports as a career by girls.
- Media can play an important role in the task of trying to challenge the age-old gender biases and stereotypes and embedding constructive and non-stereotypical attitudes among the members of society.
- Schools act as effective social institutions that can substitute the traditional stereotypes related to gender, via innovative curriculum, *ungendered* division of labour among male/female teachers, nurturing hobbies and extra-curricular activities among male and female students that are not based on traditional notions based on gender. To change the gender education of boys/girls, a school may need to reassess and change its gender regime as a whole. The school curricula too need to be analysed and be made more gender sensitive. A gender audit at the school level may prove to be useful in enabling the school authorities to assess their overall policies, practices from a gender perspective.
- Building linkages between schools and communities with the objective to enable teachers to view the community as a key stakeholder in the process of education

We need to have a concern for the Child as we believe in the belief in dignity and worth of individuals as human beings and not as boys or girls OR as men or women. We as teachers, believe in helping students to utilize their inherent capacities to the fullest and we want to focus on them to learn about their 'human' potentials rather than reinforcing masculine or feminine traits.

Gender equality necessitates each of us, to unveil inside us and overcome our negative 'male' (being aggressive, domineering, competitive, self-cantered) and female (being submissive, fearful,

diffident) qualities. It also requires that all of us need to be sturdy, caring, fearless, sensitive, emotional as well as rational.

Gender roles are a learned behaviour, are hard to change but are not immutable and hence can be changed. What is needed is a *human* approach towards gender equality and deconstruction and reconstruction of gender roles. We as college/ University teachers need to use our classrooms as Forums where we can initiate discussions on gender and try to create a pro social and just educational system within our diverse society.

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GENDER AND TOTAL LITERACY MISSION

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As the COVID-19 pandemic deepens economic and social stress coupled with restricted movement and social isolation measures, gender-based violence is increasing exponentially. Many women are being forced to 'lockdown' at home with their abusers while services to support survivors are being disrupted or made inaccessible. Gender discrimination has been the most endemic form of discrimination operating across cultures in developed and developing societies alike. The Pandemic crisis of the present times has especially led to exacerbate existing gender inequalities in education and might also create new ones. This situation has added to the gender gap in access to education, learning achievements and continuation of education. School closures have put additional strain and demand on women and girls.

The pandemic panorama and the gender divide

The impact of the pandemic COVID 19 has spread wide across all arena and in every spectrum of life especially affecting the women and the girl child because of their gender. The blow of the economic catastrophic fell strongly on every human being very especially more on women and girls who generally have meager earning, hardly any savings and holding insecure jobs or living close to poverty. While early reports reveal more men are dying because of this pandemic, the health of women generally is adversely impacted through the reallocation of resources and priorities, including sexual and reproductive health services. Unpaid care work has increased, with children out-of-school, heightened care needs of older persons and overwhelmed health services. The current scenarios have intensified the systemic and structural cracks in the present system and lockdown has shown that the gender-blind policies could worsen these issues and leave women and girls more vulnerable than ever.

According to UNESCO, 1.52 billion students (87 percent) and over 60 million teachers are now home as COVID-19 school closures expand. As formal and informal supply of childcare declines, the demand for unpaid childcare provision is falling more heavily on women, not only because of the existing structure of the workforce, but also because of social norms. This will constrain their ability to learn & work, particularly when these things cannot be carried out remotely. Girls and adolescent girls are also impacted by the care work burdens of COVID-19: Recent data shows that adolescent girls spend significantly more hours on chores compared to their male counterparts. School closures do not just mean that girls are taking on more chores at home, it could also lead to millions more girls dropping out of school before they complete their education, especially girls living in poverty, girls with disabilities or living in rural, isolated locations.

Even before this pandemic, millions of girls were contending with poor quality education and millions were not on course to meet minimum proficiency in basic reading and math, nor the secondary level skills, knowledge and opportunities they need for a productive and fulfilling life. In the past it has been proven in history that the girls do not return after the epidemic to continue their studies even after the crisis is over. There are many dropouts in schools especially about girls.

One of the primary reasons that women leave the workforce or do not enter it in the first place is their unpaid caregiving responsibility at home. The unpaid care giving work intensifies and the socio-cultural norms winds them even stronger that they could never take back their place. In India, according to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), women perform nearly 6 hours of unpaid work each day, while men spend a paltry 52 minutes. This burden is likely to increase amid the lockdown as Indian men continue to not help in the household.

Literacy:

Several experts in different ways have defined literacy. Some of the definitions of literacy are given below: -
According to the National Institute for Literacy: The workforce Investment Act, 1998 defines literacy as 'an individual's ability to read, write and speak in English, compute and solve problems at a level of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual and the society'. According to 21st Century skills literacy is not just having the ability to just read and write but it goes beyond. Alberta in 2009 defines that literacy is more than the ability to read and write. It involves the knowledge, skills and abilities, the competencies that enable individuals to think critically, communicate effectively, deal with change and solve problems in a variety of contexts to achieve their personal goals, develop their knowledge/potential and participate fully in the society. Cipolla in 1969 defines literacy as a person with less than ten or twelve years of schooling is functionally illiterate. Derek Rowntree in 1981defines literacy as a person's ability to read/write and expected from people in his group or culture. Those of another might consider a person considered literate by members of one group, illiterate.

According to National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), 2011, defines as literacy involving listening and speaking, reading, writing, numeracy and using everyday technology to communicate and handle information. But it includes more than the technical skills of communications: it also includes personal, social and economic dimensions. Literacy increases the opportunity for individuals and communities to reflect on their situation exploring new possibilities and initiate change. The term 'literacy' differs from country to country. According to National Commission India- it means the ability to read and write in any Indian languages. In Kenya, the literates (1994 Central Bureau of Statistics survey) are those who are above 15 and who could read and write. Brazilians considered those who have completed 4th grade as functional literate and those who are not as functional illiterates. Israel states as the ability to 'acquire the essentials of knowledge and skills that enable (individuals) to actively participate in all the activities for which reading and writing

are needed' In Nepal, it is defined as the 3Rs i.e., reading writing and arithmetic and its functionality. The ability to read with comprehension e.g.: the newspaper and so on is what comprises of literacy according to Singapore. According to definition of China, a person is considered literate then one should know 2000 words if one is from urban and 1500 words if from rural. In Namibia, an illiterate is one who should know to write with understanding any language and if a person only knows to write then it is considered as non – literate.

Thus, literacy is more than just the 3Rs. Literacy is not an end by itself but a means for social liberation, communal harmony, women's emancipation and a tool for heightening national status and wellbeing. According to Mahatma Gandhi, "Literacy is neither the beginning nor the end of education which is one of the means whereby men and women can be educated". According to Paulo Freire in his book "Pedagogy of the oppressed" he describes illiterate persons as the 'culture of silence' and 'ignorance'. He provided a holistic model of literacy as emancipatory political progress. Freire saw learning to read and write as an active process of consciousness rather than just the absorption of a fixed content, whereby men and women understand and transform their own experiences and redefine their relationship with the society

Significance of literacy

According to Kofi Annan said, "Literacy unlocks the door to learning. Throughout life, is essential to development and health and opens the way for democratic participation and active citizenship'. Literacy is the major key for social economic progress in India. Social transformation can be accelerated only if women are educated. The economic growth of the society is marked by the strides of literacy and educational attainment. Civilized society is earmarked today by tenets like modernization, communication and commerce. Higher level of literacy provides greater development and empowerment among girls and women. This in turn provides better lives and control over their choices

World studies have established the direct and functional relationship between literacy and productivity on the one hand and literacy and the overall quality of human life on the other. In comparison with the world literacy rate of women we see that India ranks low.
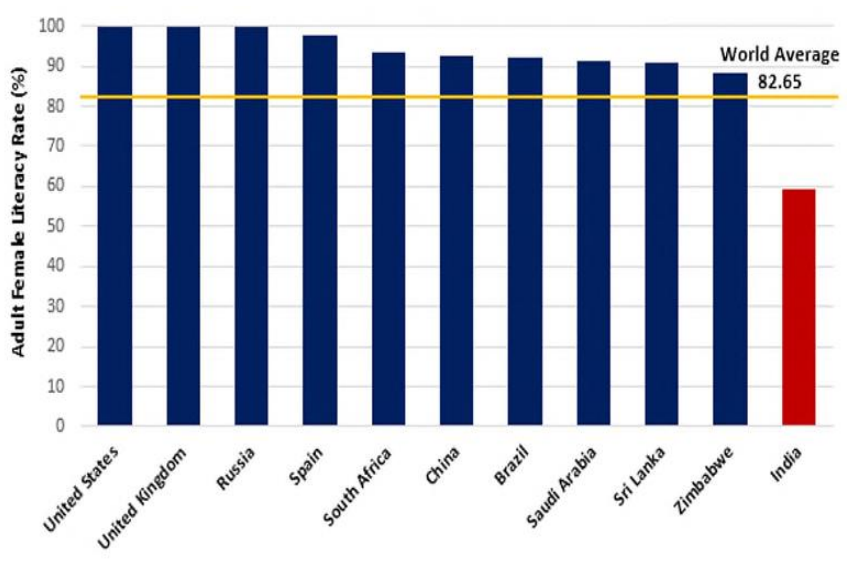
World female literacy[1]

There is no single reason or cause for this. All factors including social, cultural, economic, educational, demographic, political and administrative and so on contributes towards this cause.

Historical background of initiatives taken by the Government of India: -
In India, literacy programmes were started from the last quarter of the 19th century onwards. Thus, literacy classes were conducted for the common men and women, but it confined only to a few areas in the country. Mahatma Gandhi took a major role in literacy programmes from 1922 after the suspension of the non-cooperation movement.

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[1] **https://www.firstpost.com/india/indias-female-literacy-has-gone-up-but-still-22-percentage-points-behind-world-average-education-among-young-women-rising-7197631.html**

The first mass literacy drive was launched in 1937 at Bihar by setting up a Mass Literacy Committee, consisting of the official and non-official members with the Education Minister as the Chairman (Mohsini, 1983). During the decade (1931-41), more than six percent was gained in the literacy rate but after this period the literacy movement collapsed. Thus, the literacy rate came down to 0.57% in the year 1941-51.

After Independence, the movement of mass literacy was experimented in the Satara District of Maharashtra, India from 1959 onwards for the first time (Nagappa, 1997). In 1972, the programme won the UNESCO award. The campaigns were extended to other districts from April 17, 1961 under the name of Gram Shikshan Mohim. The objectives of the campaign were to eradicate illiteracy under the age group 14-50 years within a period of four months and impart them basic literacy skills there were many such initiatives were taken by the government since independence.

The Indian government has expressed a strong commitment towards education for all; however, India still has one of the lowest female literacy rates in Asia. This low level of literacy not only has a negative impact on women's lives but also on their families' lives and on their country's economic development.

To mitigate illiteracy many programmes have been chalked out. To name a few:

- National Literacy Mission
- National Education Policy
- Non-Formal Education
- Operation Blackboard
- Total Literacy Campaigns
- Lok Jumbish
- Continuing Education Programme
- Post Literacy Programme
- India Literacy Project
- Kerala State Literacy Mission

- The Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE)
- Mahila Samakhya Scheme
- Jan Shiksahn Sansthan (Institute of People's Education)

Shiksha Karmi Project
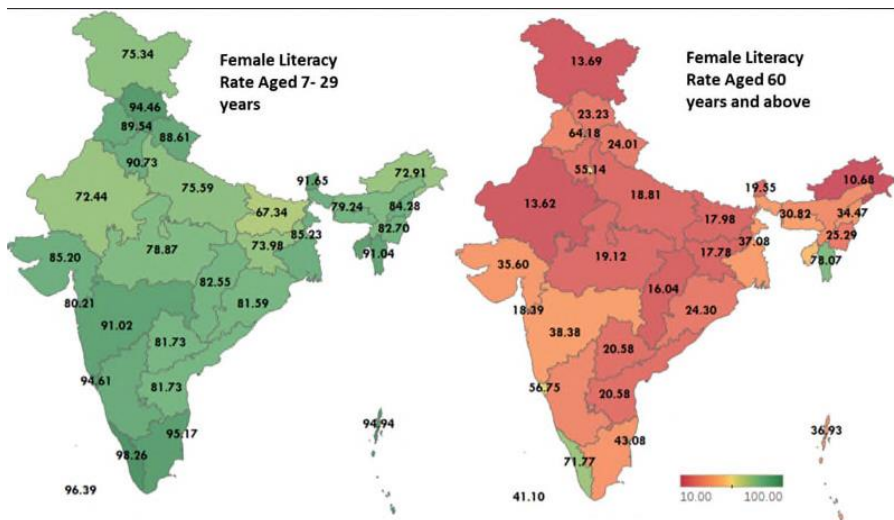
Female literacy rates according to 2011 senses[2]

TOTAL LITERACY CAMPAIGN MODEL:

The first **Total Literacy Campaign** (TLC) was begun in Ernakulum district on January 26, 1989, and from this experience was developed the 'TLC model' for mass **literacy** that is now being implemented in over 150 districts of the country. Ernakulum experiment in Kerala during the late 80s got success in TLC.

The Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) is a dominant strategy for eradication of adult illiteracy in India. This approach is a potent and viable model, which helps to achieve a significant breakthrough in the

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[2] **https://www.firstpost.com/india/indias-female-literacy-has-gone-up-but-still-22-percentage-points-behind-world-average-education-among-young-women-rising-7197631.html**

literacy scene in India. It constitutes the principal strategy of National Literacy Mission (NLM).

This TLC is area-specific, time bound, volunteer-based, cost effective and outcome-oriented. The thrust is on attainment of functional literacy through prescribed norms of literacy and numeracy. The learner is the focal point in the entire process. The measurement of learning outcome is continuous, informal and participative.

1. Preparing the Ground:

This is the initial stage of the TLC. It begins with a process of consultation and consensus, involving political parties, teachers, students and cultural groups.

2. Creation of the Organizational Structure:

The implementations of the campaigns are done through district-level literacy committees which are registered under the Societies Registration Act. The district collector/chief secretary and the zilla parishad provides the leadership. All sections of society are given due representation in planning and implementation of the programme. The campaign is delivered through volunteers without any expectation of reward or incentive.

3. Survey and District Profile:

A detailed survey is conducted in the district to identify the non-literate people. During the survey, volunteer teachers and master trainers are also identified.

4. Environment Building:

The basic objective of the environment building stage is to generate a demand for literacy. Environment building includes mobilizing public opinion, creating community participation, sensitizing educated sections of the community and recruiting them as volunteers and mobilizing and motivating non- literate people to become literate. Hence, this stage is an extremely important part of the Total Literacy

Campaign. Several Media are utilized for environment building such as folk art, street plays, nukkad nataks, bhajans, kirtans, padayatras and literacy walls etc.

5. Development of Teaching Learning Materials:

The materials are based on an innovative pedagogy called Improved Pace and Content of Learning (IPCL) that incorporates motivation-oriented teaching learning material books, which contain exercises, tests and space for practice to achieve the objective of imparting literacy in 200 hours.

6. Training of the Task Force:

Training is conducted through key resource persons and master trainers. First, the key resource persons are trained, who in turn train the master trainees. The master trainers in batches then train volunteer teachers.

7. Actual leadership Process:

There are the three progressive sets of primers. Each primer is an integrated one, in the sense that it combines workbook, exercise book, tools of evaluation of learning outcome, certification etc. The entire process is based on the principle of self-evaluation. The tests are simple and participative.

Each learner is free to participate to attain the desired level according to his/ her convenience. It is, however, expected that a learner, should be able to complete all the three primers within the overall duration of 200 hours spread over six to eight months.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation:

Monitoring and supervision of TLC is done through a periodic system of reporting and visits of the officials of the NLM, state Directorates of Adult / Mass Education and the State Resource Centres. The management information system in a campaign is based on the twin principles of participation and correction. It must be accountable,

credible and instead of being enrolment-oriented, it should be outcome- oriented.[3]

In many districts, the TLCs reduced the distance between the collector and other district level officials, and the poor and the disadvantaged groups. For vast sections of poor people, TLCs provided an opportunity to make their voices heard before the district administration. Another positive impact has been the impetus they have provided to primary education. It has been reported that enrolment and retention levels have increased after a TLC.

Some of the outcome of TLC which was followed in different parts in other states are as follows:

Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh has shown how the literacy campaign provided the impetus to women to organise against a social evil that plagued their lives and affected the well-being of their families.

In Puddukotai district of Tamil Nadu, the village women participated in the literacy campaign and felt themselves empowered.

Though the Total Literacy Campaign is meant to impart functional literacy. It also disseminates other messages such as enrolment and retention of children in schools, immunization, propagation of small family norms, promotion of maternity and childcare, women's equality, and empowerment, place and communal harmony. The second model to brief is the TEACH model. Specially this was propogated more in the northern states of India.

Well we do have all this model, but we need to replicate at different level. There is an urgency to promote. The statics is alarming. The work is enormous. So, we need to move on with lightning speed. So, let us persuade towards the goal. Raise up likeminded warriors.

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[3] implementation-of-the-campaign in
india/45187#:~:text=ADVERTISEMENTS%3A,National%20Literacy%20Mission%20(NLM).

Young and energetic to carry out the mission. The Total Literacy mission needs to take its flight with full swing to mitigate literacy. All we need is a willing heart to fund to participate, to accelerate and a willing mind to cooperate and to move forward.

It is not only in the hands of the government the politician and the like. But it should be the burning desire of every educated individual and everyone who dream to see India   totally literate and totally productive.
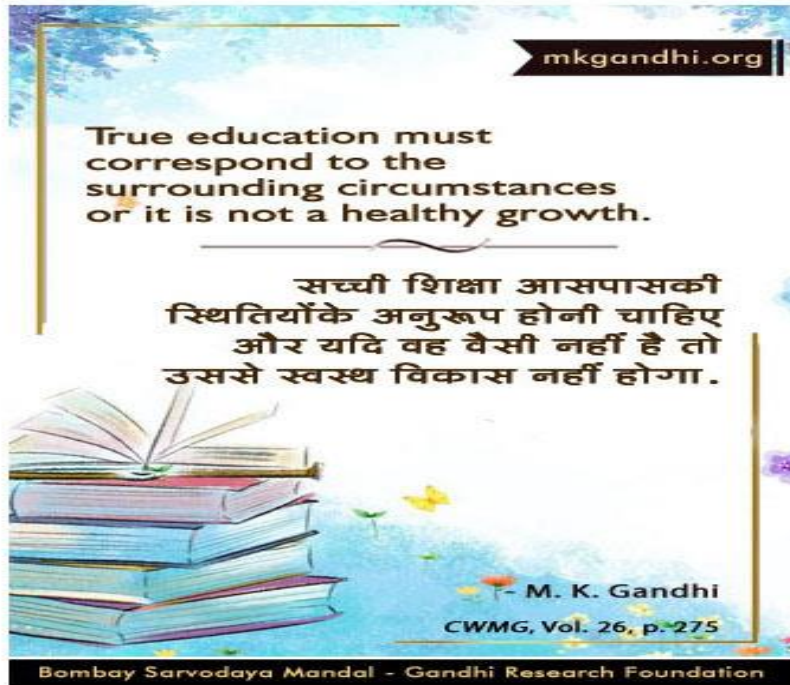
Let me close with Swami Vivekanand's quotes,

As swami Vivekananda said, "It is impossible to think about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is impossible for a bird to fly on only one wing".

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EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES OF MARGINALIZED GIRLS DURING COVID 19 PANDEMIC

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"The world will never realize 100 per cent of its goals if 50 per cent of its people cannot realise their full potential. When we unleash the power of women, we can secure the future for all."
UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon

Marginalization is the social process of isolating individuals, groups, and communities. Marginalization is the way in which society oppresses minority groups through social, political, economic, and geographic means. Discrimination and prejudices exist within our nation today creating a society where marginalization exists. Some forms of discrimination can include race, gender, sexual orientation, culture, and class.

Introduction

The encyclopedia of public health defines - "Marginalization as to be marginalized is to be placed in the margins as thus excluded from the privilege and power found at the center."

Ghana S Gurung and Michael Kallmair mentions," The concept of marginality is generally, used to analysis socio-economic, political and cultural spheres, where disadvantaged people struggle to gain access to resources and full participation in social life. In other words, marginalized people might be socially, economically, politically, and legally ignored, excluded, or neglected and therefore vulnerable to live hood change.

Marginalized individuals are at a social and economic disadvantage and subsequently located usually in underserved communities that

continue to oppress. It is a social phenomenon that has existed for centuries and has affected human interaction as well as how certain people view each other dramatically. Throughout history, marginalization has been utilized as a lethal weapon for the purpose of suppressing and excluding not only individuals but large collective groups as well. It is a concept that has caused great anguish, separation, and tragic results that in turn have formed huge indents in our history.

In India the women, children, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, persons with disabilities, migrants and aged are regarded as marginalized or vulnerable groups. These people are socially, economically, politically, and legally ignored and excluded in Indian society. Belonging to such groups heightens the risk of inequalities in terms of access to rights and use of services and goods in a variety of domains, such as access to education, employment, health, social protection against domestic or institutional violence and justice.

In this paper I will focus on Education aspect.

EDUCATIONAL MARGINALIZATION

Educational marginalization is both a process and an outcome through which individuals and groups are systematically denied their right to education, resulting in their exclusion from social institutions, economies, and civic processes.

Every child has the right to get a quality education without any discrimination or exclusion. However, both developing and developed countries face challenges in guaranteeing equal educational opportunities to all their citizens. Social justice and equity are becoming increasingly associated with educational accessibility through which the socially deprived people can come forward to the mainstream. But marginalized groups are often left behind, denying their right to education. Individuals who are not in mainstreams are subjected to discrimination and exploitation in multiple facets that is, they belong to more than one marginalized group. However, many

children in India are still excluded from the educational system and hence cannot participate meaningfully in the economic, social, political, and cultural life of their communities.

Although the provision of basic education in most countries is the responsibility of the State, experience shows that, over the years, the role of the State as the main provider of educational services has reduced owing to privatization and commercialization of education leading to a denial of education for the marginalized groups. Various studies have pointed out that the children from socially and poor communities hardly get any chance to get a minimum level of education and most of them are working children. There is a general agreement about the segment of society that is not attending school and they belong to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), minority, urban poor, other backward castes, and people living in remote rural areas. It is evidenced that a sizeable part of the child population belonging to socially backward communities living in rural areas is still deprived of basic education.

If we analyze further, it is observed that the girl child is more deprived from education.

EDUCATIONAL MARGINALIZATION OF GIRLS

Gender is often a powerful marginalizing factor in the lives of children who are excluded from education. Girls from impoverished families, girls from tribal, ethnic, or linguistic "minority" communities, girls living in remote settings, and girls from lower castes are less likely to participate in education and more likely to stay out of school compared to the boys. Even if by chance they complete the primary education they drop out later due to the innumerable challenges their family face and the girls' education is given the last priority.

Girls out of school give rise to the following challenges.
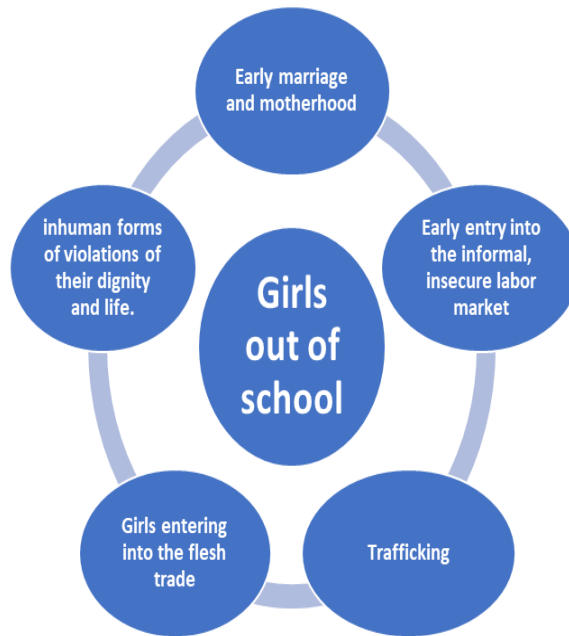
For millions of girls in low- and lower-middle-income countries, missing out on school is no novelty. In poorer communities, shortages of schools and teachers, the high costs of education and harmful gender norms keep 129 million girls from education.

EDUCATION IN CURRENT CRISIS OF COVID-19

Almost 90% of the world's countries have shut schools to limit the spread of the disease. While this disruption to education and the expected reduction in global growth have far-reaching effects for all, their impact will be particularly detrimental to the most disadvantaged students and their families, especially in poorer countries. Statistics shows that this closure of schools impacting over 1.5 billion children and youth, half of whom are girls. Virus has exposed the overt and covert inequalities that have been allowed to perpetrate.

Transition to online classrooms

As soon as the pandemic began, the government took immediate decision of closure of schools and colleges shifted to online teaching in order to make sure that Children do not miss the learning aspect, Schools have moved to Online Classrooms, where teachers are conducting their classes through apps like Google Classroom, Zoom, etc. However, these facilities are not available universally.

This online teaching has posed several challenges to all, but the marginalized children have been affected the most especially due to the digital divide. This has once again affected the girl child more. Challenges faced in online teaching are as follow:

- **Lack of knowledge about online learning**

This was a sudden change due to pandemic, so children were unaware of this type of learning online mode which has an impact on the motivation to learn and develops lot of stress.

- **Non availability of computers and smart phones at home**

Usually majority of parents from middle class and lower middle class do not give personal mobiles to school going children. The children of the marginalized society more do not have this facility at all as parents cannot afford and there may be a single mobile phone in the family but whether it is a smart phone is again a question. Rarely there are Personal computers. Therefore, the children do not have access to online classes. Even if one smart phone is available the parents need to take it for their work if they are working in the sector where they have no go to work like cleaning services or emergency services etc. Difficulty in suddenly moving from real classroom to virtual classroom.

- **In cases where there is only one mobile phone at home, access to it for longer duration is not possible**

If the parent is at home and there is more than one child, then once again the children are affected, and the preference is always given to male child over the girl child to learn.

- **Internet connectivity issues**

People in remote areas have connectivity issues which will have effect on education and therefore online classes is again challenging and they may miss out on education.

- **Ergonomic challenge**

The children live in small houses and many a times barely one room and it becomes really very difficult to concentrate on online lessons due to distractions and if there are 2 or more children attending classes in the same room (arranged phones from somewhere) also possess challenges .

Teachers too living in metropolitan where owning one room is also very great have the problem of conducting   online classes. Some teachers have reported that they have been teaching from the bathroom to avoid disturbances and it is the same with the marginalized group.

Besides this, schools are not only performing the work of imparting education but schools are providing meals to the children along with a number of facilities like clean water, vitamins, milk and the needs of the children are taken care and this is one major attraction of the parents to send the girl child to the school as they need not spend for the education. Besides this when the parents are out for work the girl child is safe in school as remaining alone at home is a threat due to issues of sexual violence and exploitation etc. may occur. But with the closure of schools this issue of food and safety has become very crucial.

The educational consequences of COVID-19 will last beyond the period of school closures, disproportionately affecting marginalized girls. There have been a number of efforts and policies and schemes by the government for the education of girls for the past 2 decades and there has been some amount of improvement in the enrolment of the girls in schools and has shown progress in the area of education of girls. The pandemic has now posed several challenges especially to the education of marginalized girls who are going to be affected. The challenges mentioned above in case of the effect of drop out of girls from the school will aggravate and the girls will be affected and will be forced for early marriage and motherhood, flesh trade, trafficking, poorly paid labour as they will be available for cheap labour.

This will all happen because if there is a pandemic and the economic situation is affected, the first target for the poor is the girl's education. They feel there is no need for educating the girl child if the resources are less, they will always prefer to educate the male child.

If girls are at home, they are more liable to sexual exploitation and violence. So, the poor would prefer to marry the girl child and there may be mass marriages of girls if there are 2 or 3 in the family, so they marry them together in the pretext of saving expense. The low paid labour is another issue. Young girls will leave schools and college and start working for the family for income. They may be kept at home to look after the siblings and elders at home. Even when schools reopen following a health crisis, shifting demands on girls can deprioritize their education. Many girls may become the main breadwinner for families, compromising their school attendance even if they reenrolled when the crisis had passed.

Since this is a world calamity and the economy is affected it may so happen that even the government may not be able to supply more funds for education as health is important and the funds are being invested in the health sector and defense is again very important for security. Again, Education will be considered as second priority. This will therefore have impact on the marginalized girls as they depend on government for education. Something which is very worrying.

The COVID-19 crisis has a detrimental impact on girls' education. The outlook for girls' education appears bleak. Therefore, there is a need to take some measures to reduce or mitigate the impact of school closures on education of marginalised girls.

ACTIONS THAT CAN BE TAKEN

- Lift financial barriers that prevent girls from going to school and that are likely to increase because of COVID-19 economic impacts. The fees in private schools where girls from marginalized sections of the society are schooling should be reduced and government should take extra efforts so that the girl child is not deprived education by arranging the mid- day meals supply at specific places so they can avail the facility and stay in connection with school .As a policy, no child and specifically no girl child must be allowed to drop out
- Designing and scaling remote learning programs using appropriate technology. Making sure girls can keep learning during school closures – educational radio and TV programs

- Prioritize girls' safety Designating safe spaces for women where they can report abuse without alerting perpetrators, e.g. in grocery stores or pharmacies. Moving services online; Stepping up advocacy and awareness campaigns.
- Feminization of social, political, economic, and familial leadership by involving women and girls in all efforts to address the socio-economic impact of covid-19. It will be important to apply an intentional gender lens to the design of fiscal stimulus packages and social assistance programmes to achieve greater equality, opportunities, and social protection. Women need to lead everywhere to bring in a much-needed healing to the world. Evidence across sectors, including economic planning and emergency response, demonstrates unquestioningly that policies that do not consult women or include them in decision-making are simply less effective, and can even do harm. Beyond individual women, women's organizations who are often on the front line of response in communities should also be represented and supported.

- Intensify community mobilization and support for girls' education. Community should think in this regard of education of the girl child. The community can help the marginalized by taking up small responsibility of creating awareness in the parents of these girls about the importance of education. Become sensitive to this issue and help as much as possible. As Teachers the issue of education of girls must be discussed in the classes especially those teaching at graduate and undergraduate levels so that the students graduating and going out to the community are sensitized and render support and work in the community.

Conclusion

The COVID -19 has given us as educationist some time to think on these issues and help in taking some projects and giving some service to society. Every COVID-19 response plan, and every recovery package and budgeting of resources, needs to address the gender impacts of this pandemic by designing socio-economic plans with an intentional focus on the lives and futures of women and girls. Putting women and girls at the centre of economies will fundamentally drive better and more sustainable development outcomes for all, support a more rapid recovery, and place us back on a footing to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

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 Dear Teacher,
I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no man should witness:
Gas chambers built by learned engineers.
Children poisoned by educated physicians.
Infants killed by trained nurses.
Women and babies shot and burned by high school and college graduates.
So, I am suspicious of education.
My request is: Help your students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated illiterates.
Reading, writing, arithmetic is important only if they serve to make our children more humane.
Dr. Haim Ginott, Child Psychologist and Survivor of Holocaust

REVIEW ARTICLE

ON *FESTSCHRIFT IN HONOUR OF PROFESSOR R. INDIRA*

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Introduction

The book to be reviewed is titled "Thinking Gender: Socio-Cultural Perspectives". It is a "Festschrift" which means that it is a collection of academic writing put together in honor of accomplished sociologist, feminist thinker, and activist- Professor R. Indira. As the title suggests, the book contains multi-disciplinary work from eminent scholars from across the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, political science, gender studies, economics, media, and cultural studies etc. It is also an indicator of the fact that the facets of gender that escape enquiry often needs the most investigation. The social construct of gender that pervades every aspect of society has been analysed from five major areas in this book namely- Gender and Cultural Space; Gender and Political Space; Gender and Domestic Space; Gender, Education and Work; and Gender and Development. There are nineteen papers that have explored one theme mentioned above, shedding light on multiple issues that affect women and their access to rights in various ways. The review will be divided as per the themes divided across the book, with an analysis of the papers that come under the purview of each.

Gender and Cultural Space

Women and culture have been linked inextricably throughout the history of feminist politics. The idea that women are "keepers" of culture pervades the mentality of almost all cultures across the world, albeit in different degrees and varied ways. The nature-culture debate occupies a central position in feminist politics and inevitably in policy making as well. We see this in multiple contexts across different geographies.

In the paper "How Indigenous Feminist Theory can Decolonise Sociology: Ideas, Readings, and Bridges in the Global Context", Laura Corradi expounds upon the need to reinvent methods of conducting sociological research based on the standpoint of ecofeminism and indigenous epistemology. During the last decades, Indigenous feminists and feminists from former colonies have criticized white supremacy in mainstream feminist and women's movements, and in academic knowledge and epistemic production. Globally, feminists of color, Aboriginals, Dalit/Adivasi feminists, Kurdish ideology in Rojava, Maori and Gypsy feminists made it very clear about how general theories reflect standpoints of the global north (Talpade Mohanty 1984; Moreton-Robinson 2006; Green 2007; Suzack, Huhndorf, Perreault and Barman 2010; Meyer 2015; Castillo, González 2008; Corradi 2014, 2017). White privilege and the power dynamics it carries with it have been challenged within many branches of feminism itself.

Social scientists and activists were exposed to self-reflexive methodologies and invited to examine critically how, as researchers, they imagine and envisage the power structures in terms of gender, race/color, class, status/caste, age, sexual orientation, religion. Maori Feminist Linda Tuhiwae Smith (1999) taught us how to decolonize research methodology; others highlighted how to decolonize feminism itself (Lugones, Lucena 2008; Bidaseca, Laba 2011); Vietnamese feminist Trinh Minh-ha pointed out how the colonizers encouraged jealousy among women and how "decolonization of relations" is necessary too. As Romani feminist Alexandra Oprea

(2004) argued: "It is only through recognizing our privilege, whether it be white privilege, male privilege, class privilege, light skinned privilege, or heterosexual privilege, that we can challenge hierarchical relationships."

"Indigenous feminist theories (IFTs) teach about the intersections of power structures and geopolitical differences in gender subalternity in the North-Atlantic context, in its margins and in the global south: in other spaces that are beyond the state/nation, often referred to as Fourth World (Castells 2000). IFTs do not easily offer 'complementary' sociological analyses, since they tend to subvert dominant discourses in social sciences, opting for epistemic change and transnational counter-hegemonic knowledge (Carroll 2015, Keim 2011). IFTs is a therapy for the detoxification of both social sciences and feminist theory, still deep-rooted in western colonial concepts and categories." (Corradi, 2018)

In the paper "Women's Studies and the Women's Movements in India: Research Trends in Sociology and Social Anthropology", Abha Chauhan talks about how Women's Movements and Women's Studies are inextricably linked with each other. She talks about instances in the history of feminist movements where the academic body of gender studies has played an imperative role in formulating better strategies for movements. It not only draws from sociology and social anthropology, but also enriches these disciplines through its unique standpoint and critique. The importance of theorising by women of color led to critiquing of many practices within movements itself and breached the dichotomies of private-public, nature-culture etc. The concepts of sex, gender, identity, agency etc. was deeply and thoroughly questioned. The article talks about how feminist standpoint has contributed to social anthropology as well, and through various examples like the Shah Bano case or works by Urvashi Butalia on Partition- it has paved a new way to understand movements and henceforth mobilise more strategically.

"As Women's Studies focuses on the relationship between theory and praxis, it is important to sustain this and bridge the divide between the two that seems to be growing in the recent years (Poonacha, 2003).

Studies in feminist scholarship must strengthen the women's movement and feminist action. The areas that time and again important for women's movement such as rape, dowry, domestic violence, development and empowerment, reservation, communalisation and criminalization of politics, personal law and the civil code, all have sociological significance and need to be dealt from a feminist perspective." (Chauhan, 2020)

The point of analysis, especially in the discourse of cultural space is not quite complete unless we understand the idea of culture itself. Culture is deeply embedded in society, and consequently in policy making as well. It becomes critical therefore at multiple junctions to question the idea of cultural space. A good idea would be to analyse current discourse as well in the wake of so many student movements across the country, how participation of women and queer community is helping in building more nuanced narratives. What was missing in the discourse of "cultural space" was also an invisibility of LGBTQ community, in the given segment.

Gender and Political Space

The divide between men and women in the political sphere, especially in terms of electoral politics is disturbing and all too evident. But apart from electoral space, the politics of everyday life is even more divisive in its conception. The paper, "Revival of Cultural Nationalism: A Challenge to Feminist Politics in India" , Sudha Sitharaman expounds to the pivotal question that has been in the limelight for many feminist theorists in India specially in the last two decades that is how issues of historical and cultural specificity should be made central to the politics and analysis of any feminist project. An important outcome of such an approach has led to understanding and integrating issues of caste, religion, region and even sexualities within feminist theory. While it used to be the case that the discourse in feminism often took place from the western feminist framework but due to advent of feminist standpoint theory, we see that how India and Indian feminist have come up with their own body of analyses which informs about the local and the national context. She locates the idea of 'nationalism' and problematizes the issue of women being

the spiritual upholders in the family structure. She alludes to the dominant and widespread tendency to cast women as the repositories of tradition and culture; and how their bodies are marked symbols of a collective identity and as a scapegoat for 'Indian Culture' and 'Indian are Nationalism'.

Similarly, in the next paper 'Can Muslim Women Speak? A Narrative on Muslim Women's Movement in India', Muzaffar Assadi gives a nuanced understanding of the two separate categories- of Islam and of Muslim Society. Various interpretations of Islamic religious texts have led to different perceptions about gender equality vis-a-vis Islam. Many interpretations have come up with regard to gender issues; some schools of thought would argue that Islam does not permit gender discrimination, however many feminist Islamic scholars have argued that the ethical teachings of the Quran is based on gender equality. Assadi upholds the view that in Muslim majority societies, women are an important demographic force and therefore central to the political and social discourse. She also critiques mainstream feminist movements in India for being unable to accommodate the unique and specific interests of Muslim women. She lays out an exhaustive historical account of Muslim women's movement in India and how they have attained a center stage in the feminist discourse in India. Both Assadi and Sitharaman talk about women's bodies as marked political subjects as well as bearing the symbols of religious, social, and cultural identities. These intersections are crucial to women's movements as well as policy frameworks, because these intersections strengthen the understanding of policymakers to incorporate more and more nuances to make a good, inclusive policy.

In the next paper within the same theme is that of "Gendered Rights, Politics of Inclusion and Negotiating Power Structures: Widow Farmers in Wardha District, Maharashtra" by Anurekha Chari Wagh. The paper provides a sharp critique of the neoliberal state in furthering the pathetic condition of various marginalized groups. Under the guise of inclusion and development, the neoliberal discourse shifts the discussion from rights framework to "earn the privilege" discourse which excludes much of our population and

various marginal groups with varying degrees of oppression that they face. In such a narrative, the idea of 'inclusion' is tokenistic and of no use to the groups it seeks to target. The paper talks about the widow farmers in Wardha district face multiple levels of inequality since their husbands committed suicides as they were unable to pay back the loaned amount. The rights that are theoretically conferred upon them take them into another set of experiences of deprivation, vulnerability, and insecurity.

Connecting to the theme, the last paper 'Cinema, Actress and the Gaze; Discursive Notes', Roopa K.N. Raina narrates the case of Ramya who a young woman is, film star and politician. She highlights the dilemmas faced and the compromises that a successful woman in public eyes needs to make to survive and get ahead in a patriarchal society. The paper is a fantastic exploration into the life of Ramya who an actress is otherwise known for her progressive and aggressive attitude but later becomes an antithesis to her own ideals when she sought political mandate in the 14th Parliamentary elections of the country. As highlighted in the papers before this, her body also becomes a marker of her class, caste, and morals. To type cast herself into the role of the 'good woman', she had to change into a 'politically correct' image for which she tried to distance herself from her screen image embracing, the socially accepted ideals of an 'Indian Woman' and by refashioning her looks, mannerisms and clothing to convey a demure chastity that the author observes that women in Indian politics are supposed to project. She regretfully notes that despite constitutional provisions and state policies, women in the public domain in India continue to remain subject to the male gaze. Therefore, instead of empowerment one observes a perpetuation of the existing skewed gender structure where there is little space of female autonomy.

Gender and Domestic Space

This section has three papers that talk about gender differences and power mechanics within the domestic space which is the private sphere often relegated to women in society. This is an interesting section because it considers three different generations and therefore

multiple levels and varieties of discriminatory practices and oppressive structures that operate in the society. In the first case, the paper titled 'Sex Selection and Missing Girls in India', Vibhuti Patel strongly condemns the practice of pre-natal sex selection in multiple parts of the country to systematically cut off women from social rights and social space. The consumerist culture oriented economic development, the commercialization of medical profession and sexist biases in the society all have come together in the form of a deadly but equally sad scenario of 'Missing Girls'. Patel points out that the global comparisons of sex ratios show that in Europe, North America, Carribean, Central Asia and even in the poorest regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, sex ratios are favorable to women as these societies and countries neither kill or neglect girls nor do they use new reproductive technologies (NRT) for begetting sons. "From Womb to Tomb - female infanticide, ante-natal sex selection, neglect of girl child in terms of health and nutrition, child marriage and repeated pregnancy are taking a heavy toll on girls' life". In the following papers, Swati Shirwadkar and Jayashree S. take up the issues of domestic violence and problems of elderly women, respectively. All the three papers talk about the private or domestic sphere as the site of most intense violence against women. The romanticized idea of home, family, family structures turn out to be the worst form of oppression and marginality that women face in the society and provides a commentary on this being manifested in Indian society. The systematic silencing of women through state machinery as well as social structures lead to skewed results and therefore leading to faulty policies and loopholes in law and order. A personal critique of this section would be that despite talking about gender it fails to acknowledge and mention the problems of LGBTQ community in India, their struggles, and their access to rights in the society. This heteronormative understanding of society can also potentially hinder in building solidarity across communities as we are still struggling to visiblise the various marginal groups. The idea of the three papers in totality gives a sense that the society deeply inaccessible towards for women's rights and furthering the scope of gender rights.

Gender, Education and Work

This section comprises of six papers and following would be a brief comment about each paper and then a combined analysis for this section, as it is important to highlight the different aspects being highlighted by the papers but it is also important to see the collective idea that the papers push. In the paper 'Gender Inequality in education Research Evidence and Research Perspective', M.D. Usha Devi examines the issues of educational access and the gender inequality that comes in the way of it. The gendered nature of education manifests itself in lesser enrolment of girls in schools, larger drop-out rates etc. It talks about introducing subjects like Women's Studies in the curriculum to transform school systems. Also, it talks about how quantitative analysis is not an indicator of the quality of education. Therefore, more qualitative analysis is also required to provide better policy frameworks. Shalini Suryanarayan in her paper talks about women managers in the IT sector in India and provides important insights into the core issues of work-life balance that women deal with. The study was done with 273 women managers in the state of Karnataka. The study focuses on why women choose to quit jobs with a highly androcentric work environment. Women in STEM already face multiple obstacles in again a very androcentric, sexist environment and the entire IT sector seems to emulate the same. Also, the incompatibility between women's social roles and work life leads to women quitting work and reinforcing the stereotype that women workers are less efficient than men. The article is very exhaustive in its analysis of various issues and gives a clear picture of the current situation. Similarly, Premula Raman talk about the women and their work life balance among women college teachers. The chapter explain well the "spillover effect" as well as "approach of compensation" showing that boundaries between work and life are increasingly becoming indistinct. The rest of the chapters also deal with social inaccessibility of women into the spheres of education and work. The stigmatization of Devadasis as well as Dalit women leads one to enquire about the idea of the "nature" of work. It is extremely disturbing but also important in feminist politics to consider these various intersections. Even from a public policy view, it is important because the concept of public policy is to make

changes on a macro scale, but if not done in tandem with feminist politics, it can result in tokenistic policies which does more harm than good.

Gender and Development

The last segment of the book sheds light on the WID/WAD approaches summed up in four papers. It considers the human development approach, economic parity, gender as an important component of development and the impact of social mobilisation on gender empowerment. Although the topics cover a wide range, the concept of gender does not move beyond the binaries. The papers are extremely exhaustive in their analysis. The idea of feminist scholarship like this is to improve policy frameworks and feminist movements in general. It is important to find connections between various issues that affect women's lives. It is also imperative to expand the scope of gender and allow for more diversity in the analysis of feminist issues. All these papers provide especially important insights into how to build strategic alliances and work together to bring about social change on multiple levels of policy, economy, society, and politics. In conclusion, women are a primary stakeholder in all the public policy formulations and implementation schemes. However, women are not a homogenous category. There are specialized needs of different marginal groups that need to be acknowledged in policy frameworks and acted upon sensitively and robustly. Feminist scholarship is something that can help with the expansive policy formation that is truly capable of empowering women.

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> **Evolution of democracy is not possible if we are not prepared to hear the other side. The mind of Mahatma Gandhi, p. 342.**