



### ACHIEVING GENDER HARMONY THROUGH GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

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#### Abstract :

*The Gender inequality is the result of social practice, existing since the time immemorial. There had been continuous efforts to eliminate gender inequality at all the levels in education through social awareness, government policies and programs etc. Gender-based discrimination in education is both the cause and consequence of deep-rooted disparity in society. The present paper aims to bring out the cause of gender inequality in the field of education taking into consideration the background of this discrimination, the present state of affairs pertaining to educational system with respect to gender. It suggests different measures and possible solutions to attain gender equality in education which will lead to opening avenues for non-stereotypical choice of carriers and results in gender harmony.*

*Gender must be integrated at all levels of education, from early childhood to higher education, in formal and non-formal settings and from planning infrastructure to training teacher. Gender equality in education can be achieved through various measures at the institutional level which comprises of teachers, classroom situation and curriculum developers, social and constitutional level through implementing of policies and programs harnessing the view of gender equality among the stakeholders.*

**Key words:** *Gender harmony, Gender equality, Education.*

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#### Introduction :

*"Achieving gender equality requires engagement of men and women, girls and boys, it is everyones responsibility".*

*Ban Ki moon*

Gender equality is when people of all genders have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities.

It requires an approach that 'ensures that girls and boys, women and men not only gain access to and complete education cycles, but are empowered equally in and through education'. Large gender gaps exist in access, learning achievement and continuation in education in many settings, most often at the expense of girls, although in some regions boys are at disadvantage. Despite progress, more girls than boys still remain out of school - 16 million girls



will never set foot in a classroom (UNESCO Institute for Statistics) and women account for two thirds of the 750 million adults without basic literacy skills. Subtle changes in gender transformation indicate that progress is being made, albeit slowly. Over the past 20 years, there have been significant changes in the gendered patterns of schooling, for example. Boys are now dropping out in larger numbers than girls, and the grades of girls no longer lag in high school as they once did. Girls are now in fact outperforming boys. Increasingly, young women are being accepted in greater numbers into higher education than young men. Gender equality can be used to achieve gender harmony. Gender Harmony refers to Relation and position of men and women in harmony based on family situation and condition within various living aspects; the main element is respect to each other (based on human rights) to get unity within effective communication that shall create harmony in domestic and public aspects.

The four strategic aspects in gender harmony are: social, economic, culture and decision making (politics).

- Social relationship: Men/ women, boys/ girls have equality in social relationship within fairness; no sub-ordination, no discrimination and marginalization; trying to give respect to each other, fulfill and protect the human rights with dignity.
- Economic relationship: Dual income family- husband and wife bread earners; income regardless methods, places, or total amount. At office, outside places and or home with virtual office/ home industry.
- Norms and Cultural relationship: equality on rights for men and women which born free with dignity. Family career development within equality and equity based on potential, and not based on position, sex, age and physical condition. Reducing in maximum the impact of patriarchy culture without neglecting the respect to norms, culture as national wealth as long as not against the human rights. solution to gender differences with effective communication and perform respect to each other based on human rights.
- Political/ Decision making process and relationship: Taking decision together with equal opportunity between husband/ wife, boys/ girls to give voices/ opinion and choices; put priority on the benefits of family life and its development. Solution to differences on perception/ opinion and various background through tolerance and togetherness principles for the sake of common benefits.
- Gender harmony teaches the people coping mechanism to have resilience over any stressor, prevent the latent and manifested crisis in the family and society.

### **Causes of Gender Inequality in Education**

In 2011, the disparity in access to education between genders was most visible in India's childhood literacy rate, 82% of boys were literate while only 65% of girls could read and write. Statistics show that around 10% more girls were enrolled in secondary school in India by 2019 when compared to 2011. While this is a significant increase, there's still along way to go in ensuring that girls have the same access to quality education as boys. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), poverty and local cultural practices play a big role in gender inequality in education throughout India. Another obstacle to education is a lack of sanitation in schools across the country. However, there is a significant improvement in women's participation in higher education. Women constitute 43 per



cent of the total enrolments in higher education in 2011-12, while there were only 14 women per 100 men in higher education in 1950-51, according to the available UGC statistics (UGC, 2013). Thus, compared to the earlier decades, this marks a significant improvement. While this 43 per cent is an all-India average across all disciplines of study, there are wide variations between different states and also across disciplines.

### Need for gender equality in Education:

The issue of gender inequality is one which has been publicly reverberating through society for decades. At first the evidence for inequality in schooling was based on no more than specific case studies and anecdotal references to support their claims but as more people began to show concern for the situation, more conclusive research was done to show that the claims of inequality were in fact valid and definitely indicated a problem with the way that schools were educating the future adults of society. Many studies have been done examining the contents of these books to reveal the amount of sexism displayed in these educational tools. The results clearly show that gender inequality definitely runs rampant in textbooks some of the sexism subtle and some overt. To begin with, it is apparent that historical texts show a distorted view of women by portraying them unfairly and inaccurately and neglecting to mention important female figures, instead opting to describe their sometimes less influential male counterparts. Elementary and secondary school textbooks are also guilty of gender bias.

In the long run, the ideas put in students' brain through textbooks, perhaps through the lack of female role models, can affect the choices they make in the future with regards to employment.

The constitution grants equal rights to men and women and stringent laws have been formulated to protect the interests of women, discriminatory practices based on gender remain pervasive in society. It is a long-running phenomenon and laws, however stringent, are simply not enough to fight the rampant inequality of genders. A radical change in the societal mindset, therefore, is the key to counter gender bias. Thus, it becomes imperative that the process of inculcating values of gender equality begins early in life. Gender sensitization in schools is one of the most important steps in this regard. Efforts are being made to incorporate gender sensitivity programs in the education system and strong demands are being raised to make it a compulsory subject in the school curriculum. It is all about triggering a behavioral change and enabling people examine their own perceptions and attitudes which ultimately help in shaping a just and unprejudiced society.

### Ways to Promote Gender Equality in Education :

Ways to promote gender equality

- All text and reading material should be free of gender inequality as bias is embedded in the textbook, lessons and teacher's interaction with student.
- Education system needs to be gender sensitive and gender friendly.
- Guidelines from gender experts need to be taken for the development of gender sensitive guidelines.
- Government and NGO's need to join hands to minimize gender discrimination and promote gender equality.
- Use of gender-neutral vocabulary in curriculum.



- All educational policies, programmes and interventions need to be gender sensitive.
- Gender sensitivity training for teachers should be mandatory.
- Benefits should be offered in rural areas to promote girl education.
- School and parent's partnership should be strengthened to identify gender issues in homes.
- Gender sensitivity programs should be constantly reviewed by gender experts.
- Gender sensitivity counselling should be available for students, staff, teachers and parents.
- Educational authorities and schools must be provided budget to promote and sustain the gender sensitive agenda.

Teachers play a very important role in the early upbringing of a child. Sometimes teacher's "inadvertently" make disparaging remarks about capabilities or characteristics of either gender, so we need to cope with knowledge, attitude, skills and methodologies that promote gender equality.

Gender sensitivity training should be mandatory for teachers. The training will enable them to disseminate the desirable attitude based on mutual respect and trust between girls and boys.

With growing concern over the lack of gender sensitization among youth, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has developed "a kit on gender sensitivity" for teachers to enable them to ensure unbiased participation of both boys and girls in the learning process.

#### Gender Sensitive Classrooms

Few dos and don'ts for making classroom interaction gender sensitive.

- Encourage both males and females to be class leaders (perhaps one of each sex). Appoint two monitors in each classroom, a boy and a girl.
- Address and call on girls and boys equally. Do not segregate boys and girls in the classroom in primary classes.
- Make mix groups for group activities and games
- Try to 'switch role' for breaking down gender barriers and stereotyping of gender roles.
- Make both boys and girls share activities like cleaning, moving furniture, to the chalkboard during a lesson.
- Plan and conduct activities that give opportunity to all children and developing sense of equality.

#### Gender in Curriculum and Text :

Academic contents with lessons on gender sensitivity and moral traditions will unconsciously mould the character of the tender mind. In this connection, government has started taking initiatives regarding gender concerns, it has been included in the curriculum and in the textbooks drawn up by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). The National Policy on education (NPE) emphasizes key values such as equality between men and women, eradicating social ills and degrading practices, small family practices, etc. The NPE and program of action highlight the need to improve the social, nutritional, and health status of the girls and also to strengthen support services such as drinking water, fodder, fuel, and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as an integral component of the Universal Elementary Education (UEE). The program of action emphasizes the need to revise



textbooks to remove gender bias and gender sensitize all educational personnel so that equality between sexes could be internalized through gender-sensitive, gendersensitive curriculum, which includes gender and its practice.

### Conclusion :

Children who grow up learning to respect both genders equally seldom internalize sexist attitudes and work towards the creation of an equitable social order which is otherwise hindered by biased mindsets and misogyny. India is still a traditional society with orthodox mindsets with regards to women and their role in society. Sexist attitudes and misogyny are known to lie at the root of several forms of violence and crimes against women. However, making educational institutes gender-sensitive and incorporating gender equality in the school curriculum help change sexist perceptions that the young students develop over a period of time. Girls and boys are able to see each other as responsible and equal partners in the socio-economic development as they are able to identify areas and instances of gender bias. They also learn to be more expressive as well as assertive as they realize that their abilities are not defined by their gender. They learn to critically question and examine established codes and norms that give rise to rigid gender divisions or roles. Children who have learnt to respect both genders equally have the potential to become instruments of social change. A gender-sensitized person makes a conscious effort to make the environment favorable for everyone to flourish and prosper. Sexist barriers to personal progress are reduced and individual potential and abilities are respected and given opportunities to thrive in such an environment. In seeking gender equality, there should be no danger in setting women against men, or one interest group against another. It may be more fruitful to seek to create gender harmony and avoid driving the wedge between genders even deeper. Essentially, people need one another; they need to support one another across gender, race, age and religion. We live socially, and to separate out people on based on genders makes it difficult to assume a programme of collaboration. Thus, Gender harmony will be achieved when the masculine and feminine are balanced and complementary to each other and that could be best achieved through education.

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