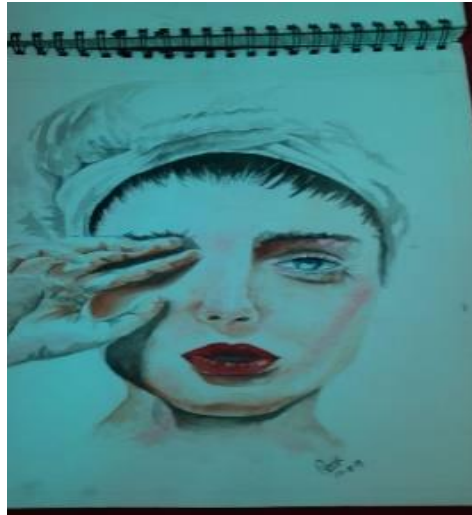


## WOMEN: CRUSADERS FOR EQUITY IN CULTURE

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*Gender discrimination is the worst thing can happen to a human and their constitutional right to attain mankind. The agenda of achieving 100 percent literacy is not possible without the inclusion of females, queers and transgender people. Toxic masculinity puts challenges and obstacles to the advancement of these groups because it can create struggles in their existence and they can feel the centuries of prejudice which is intolerable. After decades of uproar and multiple researches, the injustice that was persisting for females and the LGBT community has certainly been reduced by specific policies and laws that have taken shape on a global level, but there is a long way to go...*

*Education and educational mediums are the tools to sensitize people. Teachers, while transacting pedagogical content, can create a conducive and inclusive culture for a better future. Equity and equality, social justice, etc. topics can create respect, empathy and acceptance for others. Several education policies, acts, framework are working to stimulate the process of enrolment, retention and jobs with certain reservations. UNESCO is working to bridge the gap of rural areas and urban areas, aboriginal strata where discrimination is prevalent, tribals, physically and mentally challenged people and other underprivileged humans. The Government can formulate policies and laws to enforce the equal treatment but unless society and people will start practice it, this dream will never become a reality.*

**Keywords:** *Disparity, Inclusiveness & Human Rights.*

**Introduction:**

***Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance.***

Kofi Annan.

Culture is a 'social heritage' the individual acquires from his group, a way of thinking, feeling, reflecting upon actions, behaving and acting in a particular way in a specific situation' (Odora Hoppers, 2009, p. 604<sup>i</sup>). The journey of human civilization to globalization faced several incongruous facets about co-existence, leading to a generative response like justice for all. Gender is a social construct and determined by genetics and biology. Gender equality is an integral component of inclusive and sustainable development through the roles and responsibilities of men and women, along with their gender dynamics, created and embedded in families, societies and cultures. UNESCO's approach to promoting gender equality is based on a commitment to cultural

rights and cultural diversity, underpinned by the international human rights framework (The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948). Gender equality includes protection from sexual harassment and violence, right to work with dignity and right to education, which is a universally recognized basic human right. The common minimum requirement of this right has received global acceptance too and all countries are working to attain this goal with their full capacity. The International Conventions and norms are, therefore, of great significance in the formulation of the guidelines to achieve this purpose.

Discriminatory practices that infringe upon or violate the rights of women and girls, such as female genital mutilation (FGM), early marriage, domestic violence or inheritance laws, Dowry system, Sati pratha (which is banned now) try to glorify female sacrifice. The attitude towards widows, rape or acid survivors have taken prominence in international discourse on culture and gender equality. Basically, this discrimination reflects "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on gender, which has as purpose or effect the restriction and exclusion of recognition, usage or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms or rights recognized by law, in equality conditions, in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life" (Law no. 324/2006). Society is said to be functioning well if all the components are living and working in harmony. But the prejudice that has been embedded deep down due to centuries of discrimination makes this impossible. Gender inequalities are embedded in many societies' institutions, from family through to the state (Cerrato, 2018<sup>ii</sup>). The role of women in achieving sustainable development is explicitly recognized in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992). Polygamy is tolerated and some pastors have a wife in the rural areas and another in the city. (Sanjay Karak & Krishnendu Sen, 2018<sup>iii</sup>) even many mythical stories are promoting this very proudly.

Under-discrimination is so frequently defended by reference to culture, religion and tradition that it seems safe to conclude that no social group has suffered greater violation of human rights in the name of culture than women. They are denied the right to vote, subjected to violence and customs that deny them personhood, for instance, by being forcibly married (or denied the right to marry), being prevented from earning, or disallowed freedom of movement, association and expression, all in the name of culture (McCall, 2001<sup>iv</sup>).

The Trans Panic clause is a debilitating example of the homophobia that is prevalent in countries around the world. It defends the murder of a person belonging to the LGBT community by a person suffering from transphobia. This makes it seem that transphobia is a disease instead of just narrow-mindedness.

Gender disparity is one of the biggest problems of third world especially due to patriarchal mentality (Amartya Sen, 2001<sup>v</sup>). Inequality persists in seven forms like Mortality Inequality, Natality Inequality, Basic Facility Inequality, Special Opportunity Inequality, Professional Inequality, Ownership Inequality and Domestic Inequality. Equal political and economic rights of women are viewed to be among the major achievements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, yet social reality often lags behinds.

Gender inequalities interlock with other forms of social inequality, notably caste, ethnicity and religion, with girls from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Muslim minorities particularly, constituting the population of out-of-school and drop-out children. Festivals are also structured in such away, where it is practiced by one gender for the other gender's well-being like Rakhi in India, Sama-Chekaba in Nepal, Karma in Jharkhand and Teej/Karwachuth in India are just few examples.

Education is the tool which can only help in eradication of this deep but down-trodden practice from the roots. Gender inequality in education is a persistent problem in Indian society, especially for girls from rural areas and lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Madhumita, 2018<sup>vi</sup>). During the past several decades, India has achieved success in moving toward universal school enrollment and in enacting policies like SSA, RUSA, Several grants and scholarship to girl child to control the dropout rate from school. 'Beti Bachao- Beti Padhao', Sukanya scheme,

basic and compulsory education are free till the age of 14 are the few steps taken by the government to accelerate the speed to give social justice to the girl child. During the last half of the twentieth century, India made great strides in improving its education infrastructure – an achievement representative of a post-war educational expansion by newly independent states and the importance of education within the emerging nation-state model (Meyer, Ramirez, and Soysal 1992). India's educational expansion is also reflective of the United Nation's Economic, Social, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) program 'Education for All' and the push to achieve universal primary education by the year 2015 under the Millennium Development Goals program (Govinda 2002; United Nations 2010). In addition, expansion efforts are guided by India's Constitution, which mandates universal education for those under the age of fourteen, a 1986 NPE which increased educational investments for girls and lower-caste children, and a 1993 Supreme Court decision that upheld education as a fundamental right of citizens. Complementing these policy imperatives are other government and NGO efforts to universalize enrolment, improve learning, and promote gender equality in education. Specific policies have included the expansion of educational funding, the provision of free educational resources such as textbooks and uniforms, an increase in the number of female teachers, and the introduction of local schools, single sex schools, and special facilities (including in non-formal settings) for girls and the non-enrolled( White,2016<sup>vii</sup>). The role of a teacher is the gender sensitive transaction of the content and process of education, text books and curricular areas, the basic elements of a girl friendly school can have, its activities and content that can promote a sense of equality between girls and boys and can help them develop a positive self concept and understanding of life skills approach to curriculum, draw up an agenda for community mobilization. A child's education must include social, emotional, and ethical competencies as well as academic priorities. Recent theories place culture at the center of debates surrounding relevance, relationships, and rigor in learning processes. Culturally responsive/relevant education recognizes cultural gaps between home and school as part of the achievement gap and calls for increased cultural relevance in education to engage, support, and empower learners (Castagno and Brayboy 2008). Sexual harassment and violence also continues to be major constraining factor in preventing parents from freely sending their girls to school. Public spaces in India continue to be relatively hostile to the presence of women, and rarely function in a way to make women feel secure and confident (Linda,1995<sup>viii</sup>). Transporting girls to school and back safely, especially where secondary schools and universities are far away from their homes, is a critical policy measure that has received scant attention.And the fact of the matter is, boys need to be taught at a young age the meaning of respect and consent so that in the following generations, we no longer have to worry about the safety of our daughters.

Cognitive theory (Demmert and Towner 2003) reasons that students learn more readily when prior knowledge is activated and connected to new information they are learning, hence supporting the importance of cultural relevance. To achieve the desired goal for integration, culturally-based Indigenous Language can be use ,culturally-based pedagogy ,culturally-based curriculum ,culturally-based patterns of participation in leadership and decision-making ,culturally-based methods of assessing student performance(Hilda,2013<sup>ix</sup>).

Historical and persistent marginalization and oppression percolate to all levels of contemporary life, whether it is university level or schooling. Educational Institutions preserve and reinforce racial and gendered norms, and exclusionary practices rooted in social and cultural status groups and identities. Change seems elusive as it is disrupting racism, hate, inequity, and oppression. A Classroom is the biosphere where all biotic components can get equal atmosphere to grow and persist.

A Teacher can explore the teaching methods in ways that change the nature of the experiences of children and affect their sense of identity, belongingness, success, racial and gender biasness .A Teacher, through their individual perceptions, interpretations, and interactions with students, can heal the gap of socio-political,

historical, economic, cultural, community, family environments and create positivism. Group discussions, establishing norms and routines for classroom discourse, eliciting and interpreting student's thinking, building healthy relationships of students with peers, Specifying and reinforcing productive student behaviour and a conscious attitude towards others will promote equity within classroom.

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