

GENDER SENSITISATION THROUGH MORAL PEDAGOGY: TEACHERS' SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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ABSTRACT

The brutal gang rape incidents reveal flaws in our society, especially pertaining to the mindset of the people. The common moral and ethical degradation of our humanity is to a great level accountable for disrespect for women in the present scenario. If the ethical morality of the child improves in the childhood then he will display greater respect for women throughout his life and cases of sexual abuse or assault in educational institutions and the society at large will reduce. All the stakeholders of Education i.e parents, teachers, guardians and educational institutions should take the lead in this regard to eliminate the cases of exploitation of women in the society. A school culture/ learning environment which encourages conventional masculine (leading) and feminine (submissive) behaviour makes girls particularly vulnerable in the long run. Cases of sexual misconduct in schools, educational institutions and society are a direct result of the failure of guardians and teachers in inculcating moral, ethical and behavioural values in children. Though, students are taught moral values as part of the curriculum yet it is done in a mechanical manner by developing moral pedagogy and philosophy by a teacher in the classroom. Teachers can take the initiative to bring about winds of change by including "innovative ideas" in their curriculum geared towards gender sensitisation and equality. The paper discusses the role of teachers in developing the pedagogy for ethical development of the students.

Keywords: Pedagogy, Teachers, Guardians, Moral, Ethics, Values and Sensitization.

INTRODUCTION:

The National Policy on Education of 1986, while examining the values of education states thus:

“8.4 The growing concern over the erosion of essential values and an increasing cynicism in society has brought to focus the need for readjustments in the curriculum in order to make education a forceful tool for the cultivation of social and moral values.

8.5 In our culturally plural society, education should foster universal and eternal values, oriented towards the unity and integration of our people. Such value education should help eliminate obscurantism, religious fanaticism, violence, superstition and fatalism.

8.6 Apart from this combative role, value education has a profound positive content, based on our heritage, national and universal goals and perceptions. It should lay primary emphasis on this aspect.”

The aim of this paper is to provide a set of pedagogical considerations for teachers, instructors and teaching material on very sensitive topics

- racial or gender discrimination,
- child abuse,
- interpersonal violence, or
- other types of social injustice

Both in primary and secondary, the broad aim is addressing prevention. Victims of all types of violence are more often women and girls in Indian society. Violence against women and girls – with its severe effect on their physical, psychological, social and spiritual well-being – is one of the most widespread abuses of human rights. Abusive practices against them have been, and are still being, justified in the context of cultural norms, religious beliefs and unfounded ‘scientific theories’ and assumptions. Prevention of violence is a multi-dimensional process which requires substantial change in the behaviours in the family and society. The family is the environment in which the next generation receives its earliest and most important education. Parents can play a great role in reducing and eliminating violence in the family and society by paying closer attention to the moral and spiritual development of their children. Love and tolerance, justice and fairness, encouragement and faith, learned and experienced in the family are crucial in reducing violence in the family and in the broader social context.

Deeply concerned with rising trends of social intolerance, and more particularly crimes against women, the author decided to take up the topic for present paper on Gender & Education. Undoubtedly efforts are being made to address the situation by the Government by formulating more legislation for the protection of women. However, simultaneously there is a growing realization that there is an imperative need to change the stereotyped mindset, especially of men and the community at large, which can only be done by purposeful and effective gender sensitization. It is increasingly being felt that the long-term solution lies in imparting gender sensitive values through education, since education is of prime significance in the communication of that which is central to the transformation of the human mind. Questions have been raised of the basic postulates of the educational structure and its various systems in India,

with the conclusion that the existing models have failed and there is total lack of relevance between the human being and the complex contemporary society. Today's modern technology driven India requires the creation of a new culture - values of democracy, respect for human rights and equality.

It is said that the family is the first school for it is within the family where children are raised and formed as human beings. Undoubtedly, with India being a vast, heterogenous country in terms of geography, culture and economic disparities, there are bound to be differences.

But in the Indian scenario it is seen that the society breeds distorted values of religion and caste, class distinctions, sense of the inferior and superior. Negative forces like religious dogma, superstition, reactionary forces and regressive patriarchy prevail. Thus parental responsibility in educating children on constitutional and human rights principles of equality becomes all the more difficult and requires the help of civil society and educational institutions. Hence, there is reason that these values be inculcated as part of syllabus in school.

Socialisation of Children and Moral Development

The general moral debasement of our society is also responsible for disrespect for women. If the morality of the child improves then he will display greater respect for women and cases of sexual abuse or assault in educational institutions will reduce. In the modern times, earning money has become the prime motive of man and the child is imbued with the same zeal. Teachers, guardians and educational institutions are geared at academic advancement as it is considered as a sure way to success in life. Success in life is equated with earning money. When the primary goal of education becomes moneymaking then moral values definitely take a back seat in schools and colleges. Cases of sexual misconduct in schools are a direct result of the failure of guardians and teachers in inculcating moral values in children. Though, students are taught moral values as part of the curriculum yet it is done in a perfunctory manner. Inculcation of moral values in children has to be done in a very systematic manner by narration of stories with moral overtones. Such narration should be done to students at a very young age by a conscientious teacher. This needs to be followed up even in the middle and senior levels in schools. Moral uprightness should be lauded so that the seeds of moral values planted in children at a young age take firm roots.

Teachers and guardians have to take a joint responsibility in this regard. They must understand that they can act as catalysts in bringing about a change in children's mindsets and in society in general. The behaviour of teachers cannot be considered to be above board and they are often found to be behaving immorally. Sadly, enough schools are also not very careful in the recruitment of teachers. Most private schools operate as business houses and the sole concern is to earn money. Thus, the noble motive of imparting man-making education is lost.

How to develop Gender Sensitive Pedagogy

The other criterion was to try to develop some insight into the worlds of pupils and students and into their ways of seeing the issues. This criterion was connected with my interest in developing gender sensitivity in pedagogy and my way of understanding its presuppositions. Basing on the criteria, I focused on the agency-based perspectives through the students' minor subject choices, through the theme "Pupils as learners", which involves students' and pupils' discussions on the topic, and through students' writings about their encounters with gender and sex-related equality/equity issues.

Spiritual Principles based on Moral Dimensions

For any programme of social change to be effective, it needs to take into account that individuals have a spiritual or moral dimension and that this dimension shapes their understanding of the purpose of life, their responsibilities towards the family, the community and the world.

Drawing their inspiration and authority from religion, moral and ethical values serve to define our attitudes and to motivate and orient our behaviour.

There are two safeguards that protect man from wrongdoing. One is the law which punishes the criminal; but the law prevents only the manifest crime and not the concealed sin; whereas the ideal safeguard, namely, the religion of God, prevents both the manifest and the concealed crime, trains man, educates morals, compels the adoption of virtues ... But by religion is meant that which is ascertained by investigation and not that which is based on mere imitation, the foundation of Divine Religions and not human imitation.

Besides, a commitment to the establishment of full equality between men and women is central to the success of efforts to eradicate violence against women. Creating a violence-free society requires commitment to gender equality, which encourages communication, mutual trust and respect. It requires to consciously move away from using force and violence to impose one's will to fulfil one's desires, and instead to use cooperation and consultation.

Legal and Institutional reforms are not enough

After many years of work, effort and money spent on the effort, still no holistic solution is being used to eradicate violence against women. The need to create the spiritual and emotional environments that will enable both men and women to reach their full potential cannot be over emphasized. Education is one important way of achieving our full potential, reducing the level of violence and increasing cooperation. Moral, spiritual, material and practical education are not only a fundamental right but a practical necessity.

Genuine efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls must begin by educating children both in school and at home with values that promote gender equality and justice. Younger generation should be raised free from prejudice against women and girls. Violence prevention strategies must include "cultivating in them (children) a sense of dignity as well as a responsibility for the well-being of their family, community, and the world".

Education: A catalyst in Gender Sensitization

In recent times, there has been widespread debate on how education is the most effective means in impacting and re-orienting gender stereotypes and traditional gender roles; and on its role in changing traditional mindset in society. The education system today promotes a linear assembly line mindset, while recent advances in technology make it imperative to encourage a different non-linear mindset among young people breaking across all economic groups. Education certainly has the potential to play a key role in gender formation and change. Gender is a socially constructed and intersectional identity: it always intersects with social class, ethnicity and religion, culture, disability, sexuality, age etc. Education itself offers real opportunities to challenge gender stereotypes

India steps up gender sensitization in schools

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), India's largest school board, has prepared a gender sensitization module to train teachers and help students' battle stereotypes against women from a young age. This module is a part of the response to the recent incidents of violence against women, to make the classes more sensitive to gender issues. Crime statistics persistently indicate that the country's school education is failing to curb male prejudices against women.

The board has also planned to launch an optional subject for classes XI and XII on human rights and gender studies. A moral education kit launched by the human resource development (HRD) minister in November, 2013 has also elements of gender sensitization.

Over the past few years, the country has moved towards a school curriculum that increasingly works on inculcating values of gender equality in students. National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) textbooks – used by schools across education boards in India – now use male and female characters in a narrative format to break stereotypes.

But the initiatives are yet to show results, with a clear disconnect between educational standards and crimes against women according to National Crime Records Bureau data. Kerala, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh rank significantly higher than Bihar or Uttar Pradesh in most educational parameters. But these educationally performing states also fare much higher in incidences of crimes against women.

Partnership with men

Any effective measures to prevent violence require a partnership between men and women. Unless men refuse to accept laws and practices which discriminate against, and humiliate their daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers, the change of attitude necessary for prevention of violence will not be possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendations for the Government

Compliance with the National Education Policy

Compliance with the National Education Policy is necessary i.e. the factors indicated on gender sensitivity be compulsorily implemented.

The National Policy (1986) states, “Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. It will foster the development of new values through redesigned curricula, textbooks, the training and orientation of teachers, decision-makers and administrators and the active involvement of educational institutions’. Despite almost three decades the points indicated have not been implemented (Part IV Education for equality), and should be implemented immediately.

Formation of task Force

- Task force should be formed for change in syllabus to inculcate gender sensitivity and awareness of laws relating to the protection of women/human rights.
- To bring about gender equality, clear terms of reference be given to the Task Force and a time bound limitation so that results can be seen to ensure that the new generation of India is sensitive to gender and human rights issues.
- Urban and rural schools be treated appropriately keeping the cultural variation in mind.
- Gender sensitization should become a part of the curriculum.
- Every subject may adopt a holistic approach where gender sensitivity becomes an integral part of it.
- Basic laws which were taught to the children at the basic level must be again revised at every level/class. It must be taught in detail so that every student has knowledge of the law, not only learns to respect the law but also cannot deny knowledge of the law. In addition female students must be made aware of the protection which is provided to them by law.

For example -

At the K.G level:

Simple poems and Action songs based on equality and worth of girl child.

At Elementary Level:

- Poems and songs

- Simple stories on brave girls, girls who achieved much in different fields
- Lessons on Rights of Children, Rights of Girl Child, Say NO to Dowry, lessons on heroic women/girl child etc.

At the High School Level

- Poetry/songs
- Prose on heroic women/girl children, spots women, social activists, scientist, women who made India proud
- Lessons on Rights of a Child, Girl child, Children etc.
- Syllabus needs to address human trafficking since children 'at risk' of sexual abuse and trafficking. Students should be taught and explained, according to their capacity to comprehend, the difference between 'good' and 'bad' touch and be encouraged to report any misgiving. Since abuse is not only by adults, but also by older children.

Teacher Education (D.Ed/ B.Ed/M.Ed.)

- Teacher education text books should include textual material related to gender sensitivity.
- In view to make teacher trainees gender/caste sensitive they should be provided with appropriate information and training.
- Teachers training Institutes should take special training from experts working in gender/human rights related areas.
- Besides, trainees should be motivated to prepare materials for gender/human rights sensitive instruction. This should form part of the curriculum.

Innovative Story Telling Method

Red Riding Hood no longer needs the woodcutter to come to her rescue. Armed with training in self-defence, she is now well-equipped to protect herself. This and many more such interventions by the schools are the latest weapons to bring about gender sensitisation at the grassroot

Attention to gender/human rights issues

When writing or revising text books, definite attention should be paid to gender/human rights issues especially caste and violence against women, discouraging practices that discriminate against women.

The visual medium should be used extensively as part of course curriculum and in text books since it has greater impact. Inclusion of list of films and documentaries be shown (optional as per facility available in school) to children on a regular basis which promote gender justice.

Best practices for Prevention

Whether prevention is the primary focus or a secondary theme in a course, there are several aspects of prevention science that should be addressed. As a whole, published evaluations of prevention programs represent only a small number of the interventions that take place; as a result, our knowledge of what works and what practices to avoid is limited by a lack of published evaluation efforts (for a discussion of one specific case of this dearth, see Russell et al., 2008). Nonetheless, there is a need to describe the diversity in prevention efforts (ranging from single shot public service announcements, to longitudinal efforts; from home visitation, drop-in wellness centers, to volunteer based information tip lines by phone) and the methods that promote change in attitude, knowledge, and behavior for different populations.

Managing the Learning Environment

Once the teachers have identified the sensitive content areas to be covered in any social science course, attention can be turned to anticipating the nature of the class and the reactions students and instructor alike will have to that content. Instructors are wise to consider the emotional tenor of the classroom, aside from the level of student engagement, as an indicator of a successful course. This section presents classroom management suggestions and general pedagogical approaches for consideration when designing a course that, given the sensitive nature of its content, is likely to be an intense experience.

The following areas can be taken care:

- (a) classroom standards for confidentiality and respect;
- (b) participation expectations;
- (c) presenting content in a non-threatening manner;
- (d) identifying points of connection;
- (e) addressing social attitudes;
- (f) using firsthand experience in the classroom;

- (g) humor in the classroom; and
- (h) managing students' self-disclosure.

CONCLUSION:

The individual and collective commitment on the part of teachers, demanding action and accountability from the authorities on their pledges to eradicate gender-based violence are all vital. Academicians believe that courses in gender studies and women's studies can play a big role in sensitising students to this issue along with workshops and discussions and other such activities. Many universities across the country already have women's studies centres and gender sensitisation committees that offer courses and help students to be more proactive and sensitive towards this issue. The University Grants Commission (UGC) had also issued guidelines in the eleventh plan for development of women's studies in Indian universities and colleges.

Also, the job of a teacher is to search out new strategies and adopt fresh models that will encourage a healthier, more cooperative society at all levels. We need to move consciously away from patterns of force and aggressivity and towards methods of consultation and peace-making. And alongside critical changes in the legal, political and economic architecture slowly taking shape, the development of individuals' moral and spiritual capabilities through curriculum is an essential element in the present times to prevent the abuse of women and girls around the world. We should also note that the same practices used in an undergraduate classroom apply to community learning environments as well; therefore, although the rigor and depth of any given course may vary, it is our aim to articulate the set of practices that may be useful in a variety of settings. Presented here is a set of key elements and pedagogical techniques that foster classroom environments that are critical, honest, and safe enough for an exploration of sensitive topics in the social sciences. These classroom strategies and content considerations will support teaching prevention regardless of whether the course is one on child abuse and neglect, social injustice, or diversity.

Modifying teaching learning contents will go a long way because socialisation are taught to us from our childhood via stories, poems as well as hidden curriculum. So we must educate our children about gender equality from the very beginning to strengthen their foundations.

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