

Importance of Gender Sensitization

Dr.S.Vasundhara

Asst Professor of Mathematics

G.Narayanamma Institute of Technology Science (Women)

Shaikpet . Hyderabad

ABSTRACT: Gender encompasses socially constructed and culturally based roles of woman and men with a view to understand how unequal power relations between them are shaped and operate. Gender and its accompanying power relations are built in all institutions of Society be it family Educational institutions, workplace, religious systems beliefs norms etc. Gender Sensitization is one basic requirement for the normal development of any individual. Without being sensitive to the particular gender, an individual may refrain from understanding the opposite gender and in some acute cases even him or herself. The need for this sensitivity has been felt and realised through times immemorial and in almost all kinds of human existence, across the globe. In this paper we describe the key issues and Role in Reforming the Society.

KEY WORDS: Gender, Gender sensitization, Ethics, values of Education.

I. INTRODUCTION

The elimination or eradication of poverty and progress towards sustainable development will only take place with increased and improved levels of education. Education is at the heart of any national development. The countries that have made the greatest progress in reducing poverty in recent years are those that have combined effective and equitable investment in education with sound economic policies. Education enables people to use and extend their capabilities, develop skills, improve their livelihoods and increase their earning potential. And it also empowers them to participate in decision-making and in the transformation of their lives and societies. Education is central to the achievement of greater equality in society, including between men and women. Investment in education for both boys and girls has been shown consistently to be one of the most important determinants of development, with positive implications for all other measures of progress. It is no wonder that education of the both boys and girl child with a gender-based framework is widely acknowledged as being a single and most powerful vehicle of self-advancement and fulfilment of developmental outcomes for present and future generations of children. In a more specific way, education of the girl child is widely acknowledged as the foundation of national development and plays an important role in ensuring a safer, healthier, more environmentally sound world.

“Gender Sensitisation” :Gender sensitization refers to the modification of behaviour by raising awareness of gender equality concerns. Gender sensitization theories claim that modification of the behaviour of teachers and parents towards children can have a causal effect on gender equality. Gender sensitizing "is about changing behaviour and instilling empathy into the views that we hold about our own and the other gender. It helps people in "examining their personal attitudes and beliefs and questioning the 'realities' they thought they know." Gender sensitisation is a weapon towards Gender Equity, Equal Opportunity and Women Empowerment which is essential for creating sustainable development as enshrined in our Constitution. The State & Central Government are making continuous efforts to realize these promises through Policies & Programs. The progress achieved in this direction has a mixed outcome and there is still long way to realize the objectives of the Equitable Society, Gender Equity and inclusive Development without discrimination which can be achieved bringing awareness among the people about the Rights given under the Constitution and the pro- women Acts and laws affecting women's right and empowerment in India involves a complex pattern of advances and setbacks. The pitfalls in development due to Gender inequalities, discrimination, denial/deprivation/in accessibility/violence against women are now cannot be overlooked or sidelined. The nations are well aware of the situation arising out of Gender inequalities and discrimination. The Civil Societies are making efforts by pressing the Governments in power to address these issues. But the magnitude of the problem is so high we cannot wait the situation to take its course as the danger due to neglect issues related to Gender is so phenomenal and colossal. The pro-active initiation towards Gender sensitisation is to ensure adoption of Gender Budgeting at all levels in the letter & spirit. Participation of Women in the processes of Governance is very strongly felt to fulfil the above aspirations. Commitment from the state to ensure women participation in Governance at all levels should be seen in action than in paper.

The attitudinal problem of the society against women due to socio-cultural system detrimental to the safety and security of women are posing great threats. Women are pushed to be mute spectators in all the above situations living them in a hopeless situation. It is time to stop shedding tears for all the evils forced on women and get in to more civilized and responsible acts leading women to a life with dignity, equity, opportunity and empowerment so that they play major role in building a strong nation. Gender equality is, first and foremost, a human right. A woman is entitled to live in dignity and in freedom from want and from fear. Empowering women is also an indispensable tool for advancing development and reducing poverty. Empowered women contribute to the health and productivity of whole families and communities and to improved prospects for the next generation. The Constitution provides for Gender Equity, Opportunity and Empowerment by creating special provisions to overcome the gaps. The success is patchy and still the large percentages of women are suffering poverty, poor health, oppression and violence. Governance cannot ignore this alarming situation. It is time to re-look our Policies, Programs and the societal structure.

Key issues and linkages:

- Reproductive health
- Stewardship of natural resources
- Economic empowerment
- Educational empowerment
- Political empowerment
- Women's Work and Economic Empowerment
- Intergenerational gender gaps
- Empowering Women through Education
- Legal Issues like Domestic Violence Act 2005, Sexual Harassment Prevention) Act 2013
- Police Response to Women's Issues
- Women Issues dealt by Supreme Court of India such as:
- DELHI DOMESTIC WORKING WOMEN FORUM VS. UNION OF INDIA AND OTHERS JT 1994 (7) SC 183
- GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH VS. P.B VIJAY KUMAR AND ANOTHER AIR (1995) SC 1648
- SARLA MUDGAL VS UNION OF INDIA (1995) 3 SCC 635
- RAGHUBAR SINGH AND OTHERS VS. GULAB SINGH AND OTHERS AIR (1996) SC 2401
- VISHAKA AND OTHERS VS. STATE OF RAJASTHAN AND OTHERS AIR 1997 SC 3011
- GAURAV JAIN VS UNION OF INDIA AIR (1997) SC 3021
- GITHA HARIHARAN AND ANR VS. RESERVE BANK OF INDIA AND ANR AIR (1999) 2 SCC 228
- APPAREL EXPORT PROMOTION COUNCIL VS. A.K CHOPRA AIR 1999 SC 625
- MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OF DELHI VS. FEMALE WORKERS (MUSTER ROLL) AIR 2000 SC 1274
- BUDDHADEV KARMASKAR VS. STATE OF WEST BENGAL (DATE OF JUDGEMENT - 15.9.2011)
- Awareness on LEGAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN such as
- free legal aid,
- Right to privacy while recording statement,
- No arrests after sunset,
- Protect your identity & Employers must protect.

Gendered assumptions and gender-based social discriminations exist throughout society, from organisational planning to the everyday interactions at the workplace. Negative impacts of such assumptions can undermine the efficiency and success of even the best-intentioned plans. Gender sensitization training is the practical tool for analysing gender relations and provides adequate information regarding major factors that influence and are responsible for maintaining or change the structure of gender relations. It is also a development intervention which aims at awareness, knowledge, skill and behaviour in relation to gender. It concerns with developing skills, capacity to translate such awareness into very specific tools that can be used into practice.

- ❖ It is rightly said that gender equality is not a woman's issue, it's a human issue, it affects us all. The fact that this problem is not just in our country, India, rather is a global issue is most worrisome. This problem pertains not only to women but men too, and it is high time that we look beyond the rose tinted glasses and realise what a major disservice we are doing to the society at large by forcing men and women to confirm to expectations we have of them as a gender.

“WOMEN BREAKING GENDER STEREOTYPES” : Recalling history, we can clearly sense the drastic change in women's lives from domesticity and family to independent voices in almost all fields of work and life. Do we see any women electrician when we call up to fix our power supply, or a woman plumber or a lady truck driver? Yes, few countries may have women engaged in such chauvinistic jobs but that does not count up to a majority percentage. Even though we get to see several women achieve great positions in multinational companies, there are some career paths which are still considered male-dominated.

Here is a list of such unconventional career options that women have opted for:



Ishita Malaviya from Mumbai created headlines for her exceptional surfing skills along with a tag of being India's first surfer girl. The country's obsession with fair skin, going against the flow and choosing an unconventional career – Malaviya has broken many such stereotypes and inspired many women.



Bachendri Pal from Uttarakhand became the first woman to climb Mount Everest and inspired many such women to follow her individualistic path. Apart from Pal, Premlata Agarwal became the first Indian woman mountaineer to scale the seven summits of the world. Following their footsteps, Poorna Malavath, a 13-year old girl made a record by becoming the youngest girl to climb Mount Everest.



Mary Kom doesn't need any introduction. Five times world boxing champion, Kom is the only woman boxer to have won a medal in each one of the six world championships. This 31 year old lady from Manipur has surely made the whole nation proud and opened gates for many other girls who want to opt for a career in.

“MEN BREAKING GENDER STEREOTYPES” : In our culture the ideal male is considered to be strong both physically and emotionally, non-conforming, competent, bread winner of the family, accomplished and most importantly aggressive. He is tough and formidable and insensitive in a —manly way. He isn't the one who sits cries over the many hardships of life but goes through them as if an animate bulldozer. The saying goes every rose has its thorns; however in this scenario, the saying should be all thorns have their roses. Many men have broken the pointed and painful stereotypes set for them by this society by emerging as beautiful flower spreading the fragrance of their talents that are considered not so manly by their respective cultures.

What are the images that would enter our mind when picturing dance forms such as kathak or belly dancing or ballet? For most of us it would be women striking beautiful poses and well, this is where we go wrong. The

mere fact that we cannot imagine men performing these art forms is gender stereotyping at its worst. Truth of the matter is that men all over the world and all through the centuries have been an integral part of all such dance forms. They have fought against all odds to pursue their passion and through their immense talent have won the hearts of millions of people. Pt. Birju Maharaj is probably the greatest exponent of Kathak as he started dancing at young age of 7. Kathak, a dance form dominated by women, had for long been thought of as soft, graceful and extremely elegant, words that most definitely do not coincide with the image of an ideal man. Pt. Birju Maharaj however broke this gender stereotype and brought about a drastic and a lasting change in the practice by adapting the dance to his own way and not once coming across as effeminate but rather as a strong and expressive and masculine individual. His long list of accolades includes a National Film Award for Best Choreography Vishwaroopam, Padma Vibushan in 1986, the very prestigious Kalidas Samman, Lata Mangeshkar Puruskaar in 2002 and Sangeet Natak Akademi Award.

But other than achieving these big feats and making a name for themselves there are several men who unknowingly have cut through gender stereotypes in the smallest of the ways possible, probably so small that no one ever even noticed. Hollywood stars are also going out of their way to break gender stereotypes. Many actors such as Jaden Smith, Gerard Butler and Kanye West's turned up dressed in skirts at major social events, eventually proving to the world that a person's dressing need not make him feminine or masculine and that a man can carry a skirt or even a dress with panache.



There is a long rocky and difficult path for us to go with regards to gender stereotyping. However these small efforts can go a long way and someday maybe just someday a boy can cry and not be emasculated for it.
Pandit Birju Maharaj - The singer and dancer extraordinaire



Men in Hollywood redefining fashion stereotypes.

Gender Sensitization is the process of changing the stereo type mindset of both men and women-a mind set that strongly believes that men and women are unequal entities and hence have to function in different socio economic space. Gender sensitization increases the sensitivity of people at large towards women and their problems. In the process it creates a class of responsive functionaries at different level, from policy making to grass root level, who are convinced that any form of gender bias is an obstacle on the way of attaining and equitable social and economic order and therefore consider addressing gender related issues in their situation as a matter of priority. Gender is a social construct that denotes the social relation between men and women leading to differential position and importance in the society. Gender sensitization should seek to change not only the impression of men towards women i.e, the way men think of and treat women, but also the attitude of women i.e the women think of men and of themselves and their behaviour in this context.

Gender sensitization process: Gender sensitization programmes are generally organised for groups of people. The very aim of such programmes is to bring a definite orientation in the thinking practices and approach of individuals concerning gender. It involves four stages namely Change in perception, Recognition, Accommodation and Action. These changes take place in response to certain interventions.

Change in perception: Gender sensitization in first instance tends to change the perception that men and women have of each other. It creates a mind set in men that no longer sees in women that no longer seen in women the stereo typical image. The impression that women are “weak and unequal entity” no more clouds the minds of common men. Rather they are seen as responsible and equal partners in socio –economic development. Women also tends to the perception that they are no subordinate to men and they have an equal important role to play in decision making at household, community and organizational level.

Recognition: Persons exposed to gender sensitization also start behaving differently. They look at the positively endowed qualities of women. At this the male folk begin to recognize the virtues of women and their importance to the family and society. There is open and spontaneous appreciation for women’s involvement in multifarious activities. The men who were reluctant to acknowledge of women’s contribution, come forward under the influence of sensitization to recognize their contribution. As a result women contributions becomes more and more visible. Further women’s talent and capabilities that were going unnoticed and unexplored become subject of attention. Women too become more conscious of their capability and contribution, and take pride in the same.

Accommodation: The barrier between men and women starts crumbling down and the society slowly gets over the perennial problem of adjustment between them. Men ends to rationalize their behaviour by shedding their ego as far as gender relations are concerned. Instead of complaining to the behaviour of women, men learn to exercise patience and restraint, and take the things in a positive way. The difference between men and women narrows down as men allows women to function in a comfortable environment in the available socio –economic space. Problem creators i.e those who were discouraging and obstructing women in their socio economic participation, becomes supports of women empowerment. In the family, women start gaining importance as their opinions and suggestions are counted for overall development and management of family. At community and organization level too, women are encouraged to play their role in matters of management.

Action: Gender sensitized persons become instruments of change as far as status of women in concerned. They become action oriented and alert to see that women are neither neglected nor discriminated against and they get their due status in the society. Conscious efforts are made to create a favourable climate that allows nurturing and flourishing of women’s talent and provide more flexibility and freedom to women. There could be gender sensitive policies and programmes to allow meaningful participation of women in development and decision making process, and faster equitable sharing of benefits. Some of the actions that are making visible impact are gender focused programmes and policies by different ministries of Government and department under national policy on women, initiatives like identifying and addressing gender concerns at organization level and gender budgeting. All these are testimonies to the shift in approach that has taken place in recent years. Similarly actions could also be in the form of research and extension initiatives and linkages to reach out to the women with appropriate technologies and institutional innovations on which several organizations are working.

Implication: Gender sensitization can contribute to women empowerment by hastening the process of both horizontal and vertical flow of ideas, knowledge, information and technology. It can reduce the chance of gender conflict and promote gender harmony thereby creating a congenial climate where in both men and women can perceive and play their role in mutually complementary mode. Lack of sensitization at different levels, i.e. household, project and programme levels is an important reason for poor implementation and poor outcome of development interventions. Gender sensitization, can faster meaningful participation and better integration of women impact on women of different projects, programmes and policies. Gender sensitization can induce restructuring of gender roles based on efficiency and can help realize higher productivity of men and women in outside work through rational and effective use of resources including available time.

II. CONCLUSION:

Gender sensitization should pervade all levels, from top to down at household level. The good thing is that persons at top level of management and policy making are becoming more and more sensitized on the issue. However, a large part of the system and large segment of our population are not really sensitive to gender

concern. This calls for serious efforts to launch gender sensitization programme for R&D organizations and for the people at large to achieve gender equity in sharing of benefits. We can visualise a situation where both men and women should be on readiness to perceive each other's needs and act in a more cohesive way to harness their combined potential. In ultimate analysis gender sensitization is very much required to create gender synergy at household, organizational and community level for producing more output and attaining gender equality.

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