

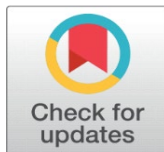
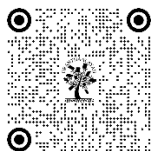
# ENLIGHTENMENT: THE PROCESS OF DISMANTLING GENDER INEQUALITY THROUGH EDUCATION

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## ABSTRACT

Enlightenment philosophy provides the knowledge that human beings are different from other beings because we uphold on reasons rather than on any other aspects. It has been again further analysed that human beings are already inherently enlightened but have not realized it yet. This realization can only happen when human beings have been given accessed to the light of Education. The present global society is a technology savvy world where development can be seen and observed in every sector and is still moving uber fast and strong all around. Women's participation in all sectors of development is a truism that needs no debate. In Spite of all the contributions women are providing, still, it is again a reality that great disparities between men and women in all aspects can be seen everywhere. Many are of the opinion that gender sensitization in the education sector is the missing link to completely eradicate this ill from making the world a harmonious one to facilitate a necessary condition for the survival and development of humankind.

**Keywords:** Education, Gender, Sensitization, Community, Media, Teachers, Human beings, Discrimination, Inequality, Equality

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. GENDER INEQUALITY IN OUR SOCIETY: INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality is a profound injustice which keeps millions of women around the world in poverty in all fields. Women gender are denied equal access to health, education and economic participation, political empowerment and legal protection and violence against women is a reality. In Indian society gender inequality is a pressing issue. It starts early in a child's life that is from the family, the neighbourhood, the society, in educational institution etc. Some major causes of gender inequality in our society is the lack of awareness about women's rights, poverty, patriarchal setups, lack of education or illiteracy. Also the cultural and social norms prevailing in the society dictate that women should be subservient to men.

Gender inequality persists in our society and stagnates social progress. Such inequality significantly damages a country's economy and development. For a country or a society to progress and develop both men, women as well as other genders need to work side by side sharing equal rights and responsibilities. Gender equality will invigorate the economic growth of our country which is crucial for a low income country like India. Women's participation also

contributes to more inclusive, democratic and stable societies. Also building peaceful and sustainable states require the active engagement and inclusion of women.

Political leadership, comprehensive policies are needed to dismantle the barriers to achieving gender equality which is a fundamental human right. The first benefit of gender equality is its contribution to human development. It is a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable society. It is to ensure that men and women contribute fully at home, at work and in public life for the betterment of the society and the economies at large.

In order to bring about gender equality, old attitudes, behaviours, stereotypes etc held by our patriarchal society have to change. There is need of modification of behaviour by raising awareness of gender equality. Gender awareness raising are to be facilitated to increase gender sensitivity, understanding and knowledge about gender equality. This awareness will provide better understanding of gender equality as a core value of our democratic society. This awareness can be raised by conducting various projects, campaigns, workshops, programs, seminars, write ups etc. and also in educational institutions, work places, government offices, homes, villages, city, public places such as hospitals, banks, etc.

## **2. ROLE OF EDUCATION IN GENDER EQUALITY**

Education is an important instrument for human resource development. Human resource development for the progress of a country requires the capacity building of both the genders. Education plays a key role in promoting gender equality by empowering people, challenging stereotypes, creating inclusive environments and promoting equal opportunities to all genders. Gender equality in education is critical for eliminating all forms of gender inequality. Educational institution plays a transformative role in changing the prevalent notions and unequal status prevalent in an unequal society.

Girls and boys must feel secure learning in educational institution. The government, schools, teachers and students must ensure that educational schools, colleges, universities, academies etc are free of discrimination and provide a gender- sensitive and good quality education. The students should be empowered to claim their rights, make important decisions about their health and careers and participate fully in social, economic and political life.

Teachers have enormous power to promote Gender equality in classrooms and should provide unbiased instruction. They streamline students to behave in a non- discriminatory inclusive way. The government and educational institutions are to ensure the need of equality between men and woman in implementation of policies related to education. Equal opportunity is to be provided to all genders in terms of participation in any event of the institution.

In framing the curriculum of schools, colleges and universities, topics on gender equality and its importance should be included. The syllabus, classroom process, textbooks etc should be framed to promote gender equality among the learners and combat harmful gender bias and encourage critical thinking, empathy, and respect for diversity. Attitudes and values that promote equality of all genders should be emphasised as one of the main objectives of the curriculum.

Gender sensitive related topics should be inclusive of the syllabus including sex education. Whereas gender- based stereotypes and prejudices perpetuating gender inequalities should be removed. The students should be helped to identify instances of gender bias through awareness activities or historical events or cultural changes. The young students both boys and girls should be taught to challenge gender norms such as those portraying women as having less worth, opportunities and decision-making ability than men which contribute to inequality of women with men. It has to be ensured that educational materials are free from gender stereotypes.

The educational institution should strengthen the potential of young girls and boys to advocate for gender equality and monitor progress towards gender justice. If any bias or discrimination is detected they should be addressed immediately and resolved by teachers, professors or the authorities.

The educational institution should provide guidance to the students in integrating all genders in every activity of the institution. Awareness programs on various gender issues needs to be constantly organised such as workshops, painting competition, debate competitions, theme based plays, movies, theatres etc. At regular intervals journals, newsletters and magazines are to be published with materials pertaining to information about gender stereotypes, different forms of gender discrimination, gender equality and its importance to further sensitise students, peer groups in schools/ colleges/ universities on gender issues. On such publications gender biased examples, gender insensitive content are not to be included. The content and illustration of such publication should embrace and promote gender equality.

Promoting girl education is vital for breaking the cycle of gender disparity.

### **3. ROLE OF TEACHER IN GENDER EQUALITY**

Teachers/ professors/ instructors as a gender constructivist adopt new methods and creates an atmosphere in the classroom where girls and boys are treated equally. Workshops, seminars, courses for the teachers are also organised where teachers are sensitised to enable students to break gender prejudices and gender stereotype mindset of the society. They help in changing the mindset of the younger generation of the society. They also help in changing the educational environment to a more gender sensitive one.

Teachers through use of inclusive and gender neutral language in classroom helps to promote gender equality. They also emphasise upon the inclusive nature of the curriculum. They also ensure equal participation in classroom activities thus breaking down stereotypes and prejudices. Teachers also opt for innovative pedagogical approaches which include role plays, group discussions, demonstration etc. which are necessarily gender sensitive. They also develop lesson plans taking into consideration the specific needs of both girls and boys in their teaching materials. Teachers therefore help to shape the gender equality through their action, approach, attitude, language, manner etc. Teachers have authority and act as influencers to bring about change in perceptions, beliefs that are deeply rooted in society. Thus teachers play multi-folded roles in the lives of students to promote and advocate a gender friendly society and help eradicate gender inequality.

### **4. ROLE OF COMMUNITIES IN GENDER EQUALITY**

Communities and families play a critical role in promoting gender equality in society. Families, communities and educational institution can work together to address cultural and economic barriers that promote gender inequality. There should be accountability on state and communities to implement various schemes, policies, laws, constitutional guarantees and international commitments to bring gender equality.

Communities should make an effort to build women's skills, capabilities and access to resources which are vital to increasing the number of women in leadership roles. The need is to generate community demand for girl's education, intensive community mobilization efforts and participation for creating factors necessary to guarantee gender equality. Community involvement and participation is important in promoting education of girls from elementary school onwards till higher education.

Women's capacity to participate in and influence the decisions that effects their lives from the household to the highest levels of political decision making is a basic right for every equitable community. Increasing women's representation and participation at all local and national levels is important for addressing gender equality. Communities should retain a strong goal on gender equality and women empowerment, ensure girl's completion of a quality education, women's economic empowerment, access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, ending violence against women and girls, women's participation in peace and security, women's contribution to environmental sustainability etc.

### **5. MEDIA'S ROLE IN EDUCATING AND SHAPING SOCIETY FOR EQUITY IN GENDERING**

Media is supposedly the greatest platform in shaping the present generation by imparting correct and progressive education. We know that education imparts knowledge and knowledge has the power to influence and can provide constructive critiques to the society at large. It is a powerful factory that manufacture all forms of news and information that can bring the world as one big village hub.

We have the knowledge that the present globalized world is a consumer world and we consume today in large scale is entertainment manufactured by the media houses. One pertinent step that the media can raise awareness about gender equality issues is through representation. At this juncture, seeing is again very important tool to represent people themselves in the media inorder to help people to feel seen and heard as well and consequently helps to challenge traditional stereotypes. When the media promotes stories about people who are encountering gender -based discrimination, it motivates the public to understand and raise awareness about these issues. It also helps people by using the power of introspection to humanize them in implanting the empathy mode of the marginalized and the stereotyped aspects in society.

Like how the media can play a powerful medium in advocating for gender equality;Me Too Movement, Time Up's Movement etc focus on creating equity amongst the genders.These are ground breaking empowerment movements that

focus on creating equality among all genders. Women all over the world are using the media platform to draw people's attention about women's issues around the world, and again elevating the global consciousness surrounding the obstacles women encounter in their daily lives both in private and workplace.

With the internet facility which is one form of media platform that is booming all around, women have got a chance to express their voice on various social media platforms. Women can also learn more about the world, their rights and opportunities surrounding them. Therefore through the knowledge and education from media, women can empower themselves in variety of endeavors namely in economic, social, cultural and political growth in the global context.

In conclusion, it is an universal understanding that gender inequality affects everyone. It also impacts people of all ages and backgrounds. In spite of sweeping and wide-ranging development in all fields of human world; still we can clearly see and feel that gender equality is a far fetched belief. But as human beings have conquered all forms of odds that have impeded human's progression as history stands for it. Hence one can positively await that through self-serving religiously on gender sensitization; gender equality is a possibility.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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