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GENDER EQUITY IN EDUCATION: HOW FAR HAVE WE REACHED?

Education of women in India in the last four decades has had an undirected growth, is largely status quoist and marked by a slowing rate of progress. There are quantitative shortfalls and a qualitative lag in the education of women. Gender has been a restricting factor in educating girls as well as women, and has tended to mar the otherwise impressive performance of this sector.

India's effective literacy rate has recorded a 9.2 per cent rise to reach 74.04 per cent, according to provisional data of the 2011 census released today. Interestingly, literacy rate improved sharply among females as compared to males. While the effective literacy rate for males rose from 75.26 to 82.14 per cent marking a rise of 6.9 per cent, it increased by 11.8 per cent for females to go from 53.67 to 65.46 per cent. The provision of educational opportunities for women has been an important part of the national endeavor in the field of education since India's Independence. Though these endeavors did yield significant results, gender disparity persists with uncompromising tenacity, more so in the rural areas and among the disadvantaged communities.

As far back as 55 years, the Constitution of India promised to provide universal education to all children up to the age of 14 years. This goal was to be achieved by 1960. While considerable progress has been made in this regard in the decade of the 1990s, much still remains to be done for girl's education. Gender inequality in education is an important aspect of educational disparity.

The present researchers were eager to explore issues like what are the reasons for a girl's low educational attainment, do their parents care for their studies, how and why the girls drop out. Finally, are there gender biases that restrict their educational progress.

Fatehgarh Sahib was chosen as the area of study. According to Census 2001, Fatehgarh Sahib had the lowest child sex-ratio. Average literacy rate of Fatehgarh Sahib in 2011 were 80.30 compared to 73.60 of 2001. If things are looked out at gender wise, male and female literacy were 84.50 and 75.50

respectively. For 2001 census, same figures stood at 78.30 and 68.30 in Fatehgarh Sahib District. According to the 2001 Census, Fatehgarh Sahib had the worst child sex ratio in the state: 766. In 2011, it went up by 77 points to 843, still far below the national average. The researchers had chosen four villages – two from each tehsil of Fatehgarh Sahib. Multi-stage sampling was adopted for the present research work. 300 girls (150 Jat Sikh and 150 Scheduled Caste) between the age group 13-19 years were chosen for the study. Among the Scheduled Castes, Mazhbi Sikhs were chosen. When productivity decreases, the demand increases, the researchers wanted to find out the status of the girl child in the prevailing situation. 75 girls from each village were interviewed to assess the prevailing condition. Alongwith, 120 mothers were also interviewed.

For the present study, it was hypothesized that

No serious thought is given to a girl's education or to equip her to pursue a career of her own. There is a strong social and cultural belief that the ultimate destiny of the girl is marriage and the role of a good wife and good mother of children.

To assess this the girls were asked:

Do you think education is important for girls? For which reason do you go to school, Do you want to study further? if no, reasons thereof. Do your parents encourage you to study hard? Do you take private tuitions? Do you get enough study material? If no, do your brothers get enough study material? What is most important in the plans of your parents for your future-career, marriage or both equally? Do you and your brother get same time to study? if no, what activities you pursue while he studies? Do your parents persuade you to leave school?, Are your parents more interested in educating you brother than you? If yes, reasons thereof.

From the drop-out students the following questions were asked.

Why did you leave school? At which class you left school? If you were not stopped from going to school, would you have liked studying? Did anybody pursue you to rejoin school, if yes, then who?

To know the general perception about education, the researchers asked the respondents – Do you think education is important for girls? All the girls responded saying 'yes'. Further, the researchers asked about the benefits of education. The respondents opined that education gives self confidence, improves social status and recognition and helps for daily living.

The response to the question for which reasons do you go to school was (Table 1.1) for 80.9 per cent (81% Jat Sikh and 80.8% Scheduled Caste) respondents education was high on priority and most of them said their main objective was to secure a job. 16 per cent (16.7% Jat Sikh and 15.2% Scheduled Caste) girls said it is the right thing to do at this age, they also saw it as a means to be relieved from the drudgery of housework and nagging of parents. 1.9 per cent (1.5% Jat Sikh and 2.4% Scheduled Caste) girls thought that it

brightens up the marriage prospects, they regarded education to have a significant role in determining the selection of marriage partner. Their perception was that chances of finding a good match improved if the girl was educated. Only 1.2 per cent (0.8% Jat Sikh and 1.6% Scheduled Caste) girls went to school because of their parents' wish, i.e. they themselves were not interested in getting education. There was no significant difference between responses of Jat Sikh girls and Scheduled Caste girls as the chi-square value for this was 0.736.

When the girls were asked do you want to study further? 91.4 per cent said 'yes' and 8.6 per cent said 'no'.

Further, when asked why they do not want to study further, the girls cited different reasons. Table 1.2 shows different reasons cited by the girls for not studying further. 54.5 per cent (57.1% Jat Sikh girls and 53.3% Scheduled Caste girls) said because of the poor economic condition, 27.3 per cent (28.6% Jat Sikh and 26.7% Scheduled Caste) girls said because of the burden of work and 18.2% (14.3% Jat Sikh girls and 20% Scheduled Caste girls) could not study further because of their parents disinterest. Poverty is the main reason behind a girl's drop-out. In principle, boys and girls have equal right to schooling but when choice has to be made, girls are the one who have to sacrifice. Girls are also pulled out of the schools by their parents because of socio-economic compulsions. The parents feel that why they have to be educated when they have to only make *chapattis*. Another factor hurting a girls' chances for education is the fact that female children perform a higher proportion of the work done in the home by children; if the burden of family work increases, the girls will be the one kept at home. The value of chi-square was found to be 0.105. This shows that there was no significant difference between responses of Jat Sikh and Scheduled Caste girls.

Do your parents encourage you to study hard? The response was – 89.9 per cent (94.7% Jat Sikh and 84.8% Scheduled Caste) said yes their parents motivated them at their achievement whereas 10.1 per cent (5.3% Jat Sikh and 15.2% Scheduled Caste) said that their parents ignored their achievements in schools and hence they were never encouraged by their parents.

Today along with school education there has been a growing trend for private tuitions. Its effect has also been seen in villages. To know about the facilities the parents provide to their children, the girls were asked – Do you take private tuitions? Only 28.8 per cent (42.4% Jat Sikh and 14.4% Scheduled Caste) girls take private tuitions whereas 86.5 per cent (97% Jat Sikh and 76% Scheduled Caste) boys, i.e. their brothers go for private tuitions either in the village or to the city.

There is also a community-wise difference in the responses of Jat Sikh and Scheduled Caste girls. 42.4 per cent Jat Sikh girls as compared to 14.4 per cent Scheduled Caste girls go for private tuitions.

Regarding study material, 82.1 per cent (86.4% Jat Sikh and 77.6% Scheduled Caste) girls said that they get enough study material whereas 17.9 per cent (13.6% Jat Sikh and 22.4% Scheduled Caste) girls reported that they do not get enough study material. The girls who responded that they do not get enough study material were asked further, Do your brothers get enough study material? All of them responded 'yes'.

It is very common in Indian families that as soon as the girl turns 18 the parents start finding match for her and in some cases it happens even before that. In most of the cases a girl's career is never considered important and she ends up in marriage and finally in a child-producing machine. To ensure this the researchers asked whether career is important for their parents or marriage, 66.9 per cent (68.9% Jat Sikh and 64.8% Scheduled Caste) girls said that both career and a marriage are important, 17.5 per cent (13.6% Jat Sikh and 21.6% Scheduled Caste) girls said only marriage is important in the plans of their parents and 15.6 per cent (17.4% Jat Sikh and 13.6% Scheduled Caste) responded saying that only career is important for their parents (Table 1.3). When compared it was noticed that marriage was high on priority for Scheduled Caste girls' parents than for Jat Sikh parents. Most of the parents think that girls have little or no chance of having a career and they will earn less money whereas educating a boy has personal pay offs. In contents where girls are born to marry parents see little economic value in educating their daughter.

To enquire whether the girls get time to study at home, they were asked – Do you and your brother get same time to study at home? 88.3 per cent said 'yes' and 11.7 per cent said 'no'. In this case also there was difference in answers of Jat Sikh girls and Scheduled Caste girls. 94.7 per cent of the Jat Sikh girls get same time to study as their brothers get whereas 81.9 per cent Scheduled Caste girls get same time as compared to their brothers.

Further, the researchers asked those girls who do not get equal time to study that what do they do while their brothers study, 90 per cent girls told that they helped their mothers in the household chores whereas the remaining said that they take care of their younger siblings (Table 1.4). When most of the girls come home from school, they are expected to help their mothers in household tasks after completing their homework. Boys can finish their homework and go out to play. In fact, in these homes, if sons stay at home they are asked - Are you girls?

A girl is not permitted to attend school even if she is intelligent. Boys, even if they are not good in studies, are given all encouragement and facilities for education. To confirm this, the researchers asked the girls - Do your parents persuade you to leave school? 16.7 per cent (17.4% Jat Sikh and 16% Scheduled Caste) girls said 'yes' and 83.3 per cent (85.6% Jat Sikh and 84% Scheduled Caste) girls said 'no'.

11.7 per cent girls (9.8% Jat Sikh and 13.6% Scheduled Caste) also told the researchers that their parents are more interested in educating their brothers whereas 88.3 per cent (90.2% Jat Sikh and 86.4 Scheduled Caste) told that their parents are equally interested.

When queried why their parents are more interested in educating their brother – 43.3 per cent said as he grows up he will earn money for the family, 40 per cent were of the opinion that he will provide support to parents in their old age whereas 16.7 per cent girls were of the view that because he is a boy, so he is supposed to be more educated than their sisters (Table-1.5). Differences in opinion between the Jat Sikh and Scheduled Caste girls could also be seen here. 23.07 per cent Jat Sikh girls cited ‘he is a boy’ as a reason for parent’s interest in educating their brothers whereas only 1.8 per cent Scheduled Caste girls quoted this reason. 47.05 per cent Scheduled Caste girls told the researchers that ‘He will provide support to the parents in their old age’ as a reason only 30.8 per cent Jat Sikh girls cited it.

The boys were asked –Are you good at studies? 39.5 per cent (38% Jat Sikh and 41% Scheduled Caste) boys said ‘yes’ and 60.5 per cent (62% Jat Sikh and 59% Scheduled Caste) boys said ‘no’. The researchers further asked the boys who were not good at studies – Do their parents persuade them to leave studies? The boys replied ‘no’. It did not actually matter for their parents whether they are good at studies or not. They were boys and therefore, they had the right to go to school.

What happens to the prestige of a girl after employment, to know the answer to this question the respondents were asked if a girl finds employment after completing her education does her prestige goes up, goes down or remains unchanged 99.3 per cent (100% Jat Sikh and 98.7% Scheduled Caste) girls responded that her prestige goes up and 0.7 per cent (0% Jat Sikh and 1.3% Scheduled Caste) said that a girl’s prestige remains unchanged. None of the girls favoured the view that a girl’s prestige goes down after employment (Table 1.6).

Drop Outs

What are the major reasons why a girl child leaves her studies? Chatterji (1990) gives the following reasons: where income is meagre, parents consider that their son’s education is more beneficial and important than the education of their daughters. It is also realized that little boys do not perform any economically gainful activities at home. On the other hand girls do the household work while parents go to work. Besides, girls are meant to be good housewives and their preparation for that role starts from childhood. The ultimate aim of many parents is to see that girls are married off. It is thought that the school curriculum does not help girl children in their adult roles. So girls do not need schooling at all. In the secondary school level parents are

reluctant to send their daughters to co-educational schools or schools situated in distant villages, other slums and so, where there are no girls' secondary schools, they just drop-out. Many parents and teachers think that girls have little intelligence and their place is in the kitchen, not in the outside world.

A large number of factors contribute towards high drop out rate for girls (Karlekar, 1982; Chamie, 1982; Choudhary, 1991). Most importantly in a situation of poverty and traditional values, education is not perceived as a means towards future improvement, specially as daughters are seen as belonging to another family and, due to social and economic pressures to be married off as early as possible.

Gender inequality interlocks 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. (Bandyopadhyay and Ramya, 2008).

The researchers during their fieldwork came across 14.3 per cent drop out (41.9% Jat Sikh and 58.1% Scheduled Caste) girls. To know the reasons for dropping out, the girls were asked why did you leave school? 48.8 per cent responded that due to their parental disinterest they left the school, 30.2 per cent responded that due to poor family condition they left their school and 20.9 per cent responded that due to personal disinterest they left the school (Table 6.7). Here 40 per cent of the Scheduled Caste girls left studies because of parental disinterest, 36 per cent because of family condition and 24 per cent because of personal disinterest. It was noted that these girls' brothers were enrolled in the school despite their family condition or personal disinterest. One girl said,

My brother is not good at studies but as my parents force him to go to school, he goes. I was good at studies but my family condition was such that my parents could only afford to send my brother to school. And it was important that he should study. So I left school.

Another girl acclaimed

My mother wanted I should concentrate more on house work and knitting, stitching, etc, because that will help me in the later part of my life. So I had to quit school.

Further, the girls were asked if they were not stopped from going to school would they have liked studying, 72 per cent girls replied 'yes' and 28 per cent said 'no'.

If we compare the responses of Jat Sikhs and Scheduled Castes, we can see a major difference, 83 per cent Jat Sikh girls were of the opinion that if they were not stopped from going to school they would have liked to study further whereas 64 per cent Scheduled Caste girls showed their interest in studying further.

When the girls were asked - Did anybody pursue you to rejoin school (Table 1.8 shows the responses of the girls), 81.4 per cent girls were not pursued by anyone to rejoin studies whereas 18.6 per cent were pursued. When further asked who pursued them to study further 50 per cent of the girls said it was their sisters who pursued them to rejoin studies, 37.5 per cent told that their mothers pursued them and 12.5 per cent responded that their brothers pursued them. None of the girls responded that their fathers pursued them to study further.

It is generally observed that in rural as well as urban set up girls are given less liberties as compared to boys. The issues seemingly of lesser importance like personal and individual freedom are crucial for assessment of the position of women in society. It curtails to a large extent to the social and economic sphere of a girl's life, right from her childhood. Consequently, she has a very small and limited social circle. In other words, in everyday life girls are socialized to believe that choices available to men are not open to them and thus cannot be asked for.

It was observed from the above analysis that the girls were sent to school and encouraged to make their career. The only thing in which the girls were discriminated was private tuition. Though the girls were encouraged to study hard, their parents were equally concerned for arranging their marriages as early as possible.

The outcome of the analysis was education was considered important by all the girls. Education was high on priority among them as most of them wanted to secure a job. They wanted to study further and get higher education so that they could make themselves self-sufficient. Poverty was the main reason cited by girls for not studying further followed by burden of household work and disinterest of the parents. Although the girls were encouraged by their parents to study hard and make their career, marriage was also equally important for their parents. Few of the girls also reported the parents were more interested in educating their brothers. The main reason was son's economic support provided to the parents followed by other socio-cultural factors. Most of the boys interviewed in the field area were not good at studies but they were compelled to study further. The major gender discrimination was found in providing private tuition to the girls. Parental disinterest was the main reason behind a girl's drop-out followed by family conditions and personal disinterest. It was noted that these girl's brothers were enrolled in the school despite their family condition or personal disinterest. The girls were interested in studying further, but majority of them were not pursued by anyone. Regarding educational facilities gender discrimination was seen among the girls as most of the girls studied in government schools whereas majority of the boys enjoyed schooling in private schools.

The education of girls is very important from every point of view. There is a famous saying "The hand that rocks the cradle, is the power that rules the

world". It is quite appropriate from the viewpoint of girl's education. For full development of human resources, for creating a healthy and conducive atmosphere in homes and for moulding the character of children during infancy, the education of women deserves more importance than that of men. In today's modern world, the role of woman goes much beyond the home and bringing up children. She is now adopting a career of her own, she is sharing more than half of the life's burdens. Moreover, she is sharing equally with man the responsibility for the development of society. Therefore, the country can progress fully only when women are properly educated.

The girls were quite articulate in expressing their disapproval of the discriminatory practices. Yet a large number felt that the differences were inevitable as they are a part of the norm of the society. They were comfortable with their rules and felt that they were not at a disadvantage compared to boys.

The notion of equality of opportunity in education as one of the prime constituents of human rights is accepted by all civilized societies. But the one group that has yet to gain meaningful access to education is of girl children in India. Despite all developmental measures and constitutional and legal guarantees, girl and women still lag behind boys and remain so in almost all sectors including education. Education has been identified as the major instrument for raising the status of women. Hence, with the acceptance of access to education for women on par with men was accepted. But in contrary, education is not available to all equally. There is widespread illiteracy among women, and moreover, gender inequality is reinforced in education which is proved by the fact that literacy rate for females is 54% as compared to males i.e. 76%.. Gender disparities are comparisons with regard to enrolment and retention.

"Educate a man and you educate an individual", goes the old saying, "but educate a woman, and you educate a family," Sounds great. But go deeper and you will find that the saying implies subordination of a woman's role and identity to the needs of the group – her family. Isn't she supposed to transmit her knowledge to others, may be, her kith and kin, rather than use it for herself.

This child of the weaker sex is however supposed to be strong enough to perform the more hazardous, unseen, unacknowledged, unaccounted for back-breaking domestic chores, sometimes, even on an empty stomach, or scanty food or leftovers in the kitchen.

The mother acts as first hand, direct socialising agent to the girl. She teaches her the roles and behaviour norms tailored for them – the girls. She herself had been a girl once – one who aspired to be her own self, to grow and develop to full potential. She has been brought up in specific set of social prescriptions. She has internalized these prescriptions throughout the years. Now, as a mother, she acts as a channel for realization of social norms. She

has been made to believe that a boy is more preferable to girl when she was pregnant and expecting a baby, she was made to aspire for a boy. She instills in her daughter what that dominant counterpart wants her to – that females are secondary, subordinate, that they need not to be educated too much, that males are superior. How to cook, how to serve, how to talk, how to wear clothes, how to behave without realization of the fact that they are doing the same injustice to their daughters which was done to themselves a few years back (Baligar, 1999).

In several cultures, elaborate rituals prepare and herald the coming of the male child, while the female child is ignored, even cast aside. Anecdotes and proverbs refer to the pride with which the male child is welcomed, and the gloom that casts a shadow on the coming of the baby girl. In the Arab language, for instance, any unexpected silence or conversational gap in an assembly wakes the comment “*khilgat bint*” or “why the silence? Has a girl been born?” A phrase from the Korean language translates to: “A girl lets you down twice, once at birth and second time when she marries. The girl thus represents a parental feeling of being let down, cheated or burdened” (Sohoni, 1990).

It has been found that ‘almost’ all societies have valued sons more than daughters even when there is no preference for sons, very few cultures actively prefer daughters (Ravindran, 1986). In this context the researchers wanted to know the prevailing situation in the field area and asked few questions from the mothers.

In the present study all respondent mothers wanted male children. The women wanted a daughter only if they had no living daughter. But, preference was more for sons. On the contrary, 66.7 per cent respondent mothers strongly felt that birth of a child should be greeted in the same way whether a son or a daughter. 33.3 per cent mothers openly admitted that birth of sons should be greeted with greater celebrations than birth of a daughter [Table 1.9]. The grandmother of a girl during the interview recited an old saying regarding birth of a son.

Jad ghar jamaiya putt ve babula, hun daaru di rut ve babula, Jad ghar jammi dhe ve babula sochi peg aye jee ve babula. (It is a time for celebration, when a son is born, it is a time for sorrow if a daughter is born).

In Punjab, when the child is born, the women present at the time, call out that a baby girl is born even if it’s a boy. This is done on purpose because it is feared that with the happiness resulting from the birth of a son, the mother’s placenta may not be released thus spreading poison in her body. If the infant is a son, *shirin* leaves are hung outside the house, as an indication of the lucky incident. Often the happy event is announced by the beat of a metal tray outside the main door by some female relative. Some people make the mother count the beams of the roof after delivery in the belief that she will bear as many sons (Bhatt and Gopal, 2006).

Indian women derive their identity from motherhood while a son grants them both certification and redemption.

Technologies like amniocentesis and ultrasounds used in most part of the world largely for foetal abnormalities, are used in large parts of Indian subcontinent for determining the sex of the foetus so that the mother can have abortion if the foetus in the womb happens to be a female. The rapid spread of these tests has resulted in sex selective abortions of hundreds of thousands of female foetuses. None of the mothers admitted that they have ever aborted a female baby.

No discrimination was found in immunization all the mothers claimed that their sons as well as daughters were immunized.

21.7 per cent mother respondents were less favourable to the idea of keeping their daughters in school and more inclined towards their son's education. They strongly felt that daughters should not expect to have a formal education and certainly not as much as sons once a girl gone to school she will never take a broom in her hand. A prospective daughter-in-law who is educated is never accepted by the elders and even the family would think she was lacking modesty. 78.3 per cent mothers had a positive attitude towards their daughter's education and felt that daughters and sons should have the same opportunity for education of their choice. 76.7 per cent mother respondents wanted to give higher education to their daughters whereas 23.3 per cent mothers wanted to get their daughters married as early as possible (Table 1.9).

When asked further why they do not want to give their daughters higher education they revealed that problem in getting married was the main reason behind this. It was very difficult to find a suitable groom if the daughter is highly educated. These mothers felt that it was enough to educate girls upto secondary level. They regarded college as a place where youngsters learn 'Western Ways' and unleash the teachings of the home (Table 1.11)

If we see the responses literacy-wise, 64.9 per cent of the illiterate mothers did not want to give higher education to their daughters whereas 35.1 per cent illiterate mothers wanted their daughters to be highly educated. All the literate mothers wanted their daughters to be highly educated. There was a significant difference in the responses of the literate and illiterate mothers. One of the reasons for giving higher education seemed to be valued for its role in increasing her eligibility for marriage. The mothers admitted

These days if you talk about a girl's marriage, people ask 'what is her education?' when my daughter is not literate what answer can I give?

In terms of aspiration 76.7 per cent mothers wanted their daughters to be career women whereas 23.3 per cent mothers wanted their daughters to be good housewives. The mothers who aspired career for their daughters perceived

that it could serve as a safeguard against misfortunes such as death of the husband or separation from him due to disharmony or divorce. (Table 1.12).

Moreover, they felt that their daughters should not be dominated by their husbands as they were. One of the mothers said

My husband slaps me very often, without any fault of mine. If my daughter will be a bread-winner she will not go through the same phase in life.

Whereas the mothers who wanted their daughters to be housewives said that if their daughters will be career women they can never be good wives, good daughters-in-law and good mothers and this will bring bad name to their family.

Almost universally, men grow up being taught, believing, and knowing that they own women. Culture and religion foster the perception of the naturalness of male supersession on the female. Whatever their background women have to deal with psychological and physical aggressions from men. Although there is growing comprehension of the fact that the long standing structures of male dominance and privilege are not sacrosanct, nor indeed given in the genetic inheritance, but are social impositions, in fact, the nature of the dynamic of women's subordination is still poorly understood. 31.7 per cent women felt that it is proper for a man to dominate his wife on all major issues. 68.3 per cent mother respondents favoured that a man should treat his wife as equal and consult her on all major issues [Table-1.9(c)]. 86.7 per cent literate mothers felt that all men should consider their wives as equal to them as compared to 27 per cent illiterate mothers. On this issue, literacy also played a pivotal role.

It is unfortunate that society today, with its rigid social structures is patriarchal and sexist and in it men behave aggressively and dominate over women, often in violent manners while women are kept in subordinate position. When a landlord beats a landless man it is challenged in a court and he is punished by law. But when a woman is beaten by her husband, it is not challenged, but considered a private affair of the family.

Studies from different researchers show that girls are considered as a burden whereas not even a single study proves them not to be burden. In this context the present researchers investigated to inquire into this asked the mother respondents "Do you think your daughter is a burden". 80 per cent mothers thought their daughters were not a burden but an asset whereas 20 per cent mothers took their daughters as a burden. They felt that they had greater responsibility towards their daughters as compared to their sons. From birth to death daughters are their responsibility. The researcher asked a mother why she feels her daughter is a burden: She replied,

When daughters are young, parents have to be careful in their upbringing, then get them married and later on the processes of giving gifts continues throughout the life.

Further the researchers wanted to correlate this response with literacy. There was a significant difference in the responses of literate and illiterate mothers. 59.5 per cent illiterate mothers considered their daughters – a burden whereas only 2.4 per cent literate mothers felt the same for their daughters. On the contrary, 97.6 per cent of the literate mothers and 40.5 per cent of the illiterate mothers did not consider their daughters a burden.

All the mothers felt that girls should be given equal treatment in family decision making process and were of the view that daughters should make themselves self-sufficient.

A girl should be consulted before her marriage. This was supported by 88.3 per cent mothers and 11.7 per cent refused to support this idea.

One of the most important variables of social development of any society is the level of literacy and educational attainment of all - men and women. Education is an important variable affecting demographic behaviour such as marriage, reproduction, mortality, health care, migration and labour force participation. By denying this important variable to the girl child, half of its population of the country, and the overall development of the nation will be jeopardized.

Granting of equal rights enacting very many legislations cannot be translated into reality unless the traditional attitudes towards a girl child in society are altered. Social legislations have been ineffective because the people are still unaware of the legislations and their objectives. The legislations have been imposed on a society whose social and cultural structures are resistant to change- Only a strong mass-based movement organized by enlightened women, leadership will be able, to achieve justice for the girl child.

A large majority of women population in India suffers from 'deprivation syndrome', women is devoid of 'tender loving care' and always kept at a lower as a subservient creature, to be subjugated to the will of all around her till she attains the status of a dominant autocratic being as a great old mother, grand mother and mother-in-law. The period of childhood and reproductive age group i.e. between 15-45 years are spent as a machine for working at the mercy and will of others, viz. father, husband, sons, mother-in-law and other elders, all of them do matter to her. Hence, her needs for food, clothing and care at large are all dependent upon the moods and motives of all these important persons. This selfish mode and system of family and society though well understood, yet not taken to task, which in terms of today does not need therapy but requires complete surgery Education is the tool that can help break the pattern of gender discrimination and bring lasting change for women in developing countries.

Educated women are essential to ending gender bias, starting by reducing poverty that makes discrimination even worse in the developing

world. The most basic skills in literacy and arithmetic open up opportunities for better-paying jobs for women. The longer a girl is able to stay in school, the greater her chances to pursue worthwhile employment, higher education, and a life without the hazards of extreme poverty.

Women who have had some schooling are more likely to get married later, survive childbirth, have fewer and healthier children, and make sure their own children complete school. They also understand hygiene and nutrition better and are more likely to prevent disease by visiting health care facilities. The UN estimates that for every year a woman spends in primary school, the risk of her child dying prematurely is reduced by 8 per cent.

Girls' education also means comprehensive change for a society. As women get the opportunity to go to school and obtain higher-level jobs, they gain status in their communities. Status translates into the power to influence their families and societies.

Even bigger changes become possible as girls' education becomes the cultural norm. Women can't defend themselves against physical and sexual abuse until they have the authority to speak against it without fear. Knowledge gives that authority.

It is imperative that we should give top priority to improve female literacy and educational levels and economic status by exploring all possible formal and informal means of education. Education is considered to be an investment on people in terms of human resource development. Hence it is the obligation on the part of the government and all the educational institutions to strive for the promotion of girl's/women's education in order to bring them into the mainstream.

Gender equality is an enormously complex concept but an essential value for a democratic set-up which India has chosen. Biological factors do and will continue to play their role in shaping gender differences but it is imperative to recognize the important role of socio-cultural factors which are continuously and at present rapidly changing as a result of technological advances. Gender role sharing seems to be an alternative worth exploring to replace rigid gender role-stereotyping or role reversal. Younger generation needs to be sensitized on gender issues through appropriate communication and educational approaches.

Presently most of the discussions, seminars and programmes on gender issues are confined to groups which are already supporters of the idea of gender equality. Instead of 'preaching the converts', it is now time to place emphasis on reaching the groups unexposed to the idea.

Right socialization, even re-socialisation of men and women will have to be taken up. Society/community can help, law alone will be of no use because it is the society/community that has to give social sanction to the legal sanction to make it workable/effective.

Every effort has to be made to remove disparities under which a girl child is born and grows up. The time for action is now.

Table 1.1
Reasons for going to school

	Jat Sikh (n = 132)	Scheduled Caste (n = 125)	Total (n = 257)
Parent's wish	1(0.8%)	2(1.6%)	3(1.2%)
Want to get education	107(81%)	101(80.8%)	208(80.9%)
So that one does not have to sit idle at home	22 (16.7%)	19(15.2%)	41(16%)
Better marriage prospects	2(1.5%)	3(2.4%)	5(1.9%)
Total	132	125	257

Table 1.2
Reason for not studying further

	Jat Sikh (n = 7)	SCs (n = 15)	Total (n = 22)
Poor economic conditions of the family	4 (57.1%)	8 (53.3%)	12 (54.5%)
Disinterest of parents	1 (14.3%)	3 (20%)	4 (18.2%)
Burden of household work	2 (28.6%)	4 (26.7%)	6 (27.3%)
Total	7	15	22

Table 1.3
Future plans for daughters

	Jat Sikh (n = 132)	Scheduled Castes (n = 125)	Total (n = 257)
Career	23 (17.4%)	17 (13.6%)	40 (15.6%)
Marriage	18 (13.6%)	27 (21.6%)	45 (17.5%)
Both equally	91 (68.9%)	81 (64.8%)	172 (66.9%)
Total	132	125	257

Table 1.4
Activities pursued by girls while brothers study

	Jat Sikh (n = 7)	Scheduled Caste (n = 23)	Total (n = 30)
Help mother in household chores	6 (85.7%)	21 (91.3%)	27 (90%)
Take care of younger brother/sister	1 (14.3%)	2 (8.7%)	3 (10%)
Any other (Specify)	-	-	-
Total	7 (100%)	23 (100%)	30 (100%)

Table 1.5
Reason for parent's interest in educating boys

	Jat Sikh (n = 13)	Scheduled Caste (n = 17)	Total (n = 30)
He is a boy	3 (23.07%)	2 (1.8%)	5 (16.7%)
He will earn money for the family	6 (46.2%)	7 (41.8%)	13 (43.3%)
He will provide support to the parents in their old age	4 (30.8%)	8 (47.05%)	12 (40%)
Total	13 (100%)	17 (100%)	30 (100%)

Table 1.6
Prestige of a girl after employment

	Jat Sikh (n = 150)	Scheduled Caste (n = 150)	Total (n = 300)
Go up	150 (100%)	148 (98.7%)	298 (99.3%)
Go down	-	-	-
Remain unchanged	-	2 (1.3%)	2 (0.7%)
Total	150 (100%)	150 (100%)	300 (100%)

Table 1.7
Reasons for leaving studies

	Jat Sikh (n = 18)	Scheduled Caste (n = 25)	Total (n = 43)
Lack of time	11 (61.1%)	10 (40%)	21 (48.8%)
Family conditions	4 (22.2%)	9 (36%)	13 (30.2%)
Personal disinterest	3 (16.7%)	6 (24%)	9 (20.9%)
Any other	-	-	-

Table 1.8
Persuasions for further studies

	Jat Sikh (n = 5)	Scheduled Castes (n = 3)	Total (n = 8)
Father	-	-	-
Mother	2 (40%)	1 (33.3%)	3 (37.5%)
Brother	1 (20%)	-	1 (12.5%)
Sister	2 (40%)	2 (66.7%)	4 (50%)
Total	5 (100%)	3 (100%)	8 (100%)

Table 1.9

	Jat Sikh (n = 60)	Scheduled Caste (n=60)	Total (n = 120)
(a) Birth of a child should be greeted in the same way whether is a son or a daughter	42 (70%)	38 (63.3%)	80 (66.7%)
or Birth of sons should be greeted with greater celebrations than birth of a daughter.	18 (30%)	22 (36.7%)	40 (33.3%)
(b) Daughter should not expect to have a formal education and certainly not as much as son	18 (30%)	8 (13.3%)	26 (21.7%)
or Daughter and sons should have the same opportunity for the education of their choice	42 (70%)	52 (86.7%)	94 (78.3%)
(c) It is proper for a man to dominate over his wife on all major issues	21 (35%)	17 (28.3%)	38 (31.7%)
Or A man should treat his wife as an equal and consult her on all major issues	39 (65%)	43 (71.7%)	82 (68.3%)
(d) A woman can not be held responsible for the sex of the child	30 (50%)	34 (56.7%)	64 (53.3%)
Or In order to be worthy of her family, a woman should atleast produce one son.	30 (50%)	26 (43.3%)	56 (46.7%)
(e) It is totally unethical for a man to remarry because his wife has not had a son.	59 (98.3%)	45 (75%)	104 (86.7%)
Or A man should be allowed to remarry if his first wife has not produced a son.	1 (1.7%)	15 (25%)	16 (13.3%)
(f) A man should help his wife in the house and in the care of children as and when necessary	47 (78.37%)	39 (65%)	86 (71.7%)
Or Household work is a woman's domain and her husband should not help in housework and care of children	13 (21.7%)	21 (35%)	34 (28.3%)
(g) Greater control should be exercised on the conduct of girls than of boys	40 (66.7%)	28 (46.7%)	68 (56.7%)
Or Sons and daughters should be brought up with same amount of trust control and freedom.	20 (33.3%)	32 (53.3%)	52 (43.3%)

Table 1.10
Mothers' opinion on daughters' education

	Jat Sikh (n = 60)	Scheduled Caste (n = 60)	Total (n = 120)
Give your daughter higher education	47 (78.3%)	45 (75%)	92 (76.7%)
Get her married as early as possible	13 (46.4%)	15 (53.6%)	28 (23.3%)
Total	60 (100%)	60 (100%)	120 (100%)

Table 1.11
Reason for not giving higher education to daughter

	Jat Sikh (n=11)	Scheduled Caste (n=13)	Total (n=24)
She will demand freedom and equality	0	0	0
Problem in getting her married	11 (100%)	13 (100%)	24 (100%)
Total	11 (100%)	13 (100%)	24 (100%)

Table 1.12
You want to see your daughter as

	Jat Sikh (n = 60)	Scheduled Caste (n = 60)	Total (n = 120)
Career Woman	49 (81.7%)	43 (71.7%)	92 (76.7%)
Housewife	11 (18.3%)	17 (28.3%)	28 (23.3%)
Total	60 (100%)	60 (100%)	120 (100%)

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