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Gender, Food and Curriculum

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Abstract

The issues of gender are most important aspect in contemporary society. The socialization of people decides the social behaviour towards male and female. The status of women is not satisfactory in patriarchal society. Food and curriculum are key role in our society. How have women been suffering from right representation in textbook that is followed the curriculum? Food is most vital element for all living organism. Women are also discriminated in food at various levels. So I explored the circumstances of women through food and curriculum. Curriculum is the part of gender sensitization in our society and it try to remove gender prejudices as well as gender biases in the textbooks.

Keyword: Gender, Food, Curriculum, and Textbook.

Article

We all come across the term 'gender' in everyday life. The issues of gender are most important in our society. Gender is the division of people into two categories, 'men' and 'women'. Through interaction with caretakers, socialization in childhood, peer pressure in adolescence, and gender work and family roles, women and men are socially constructed to be different in behaviour, attitudes, and emotions. The gendered social order is based on and maintains these differences (Encyclopedia of Sociology, 2000, p.1057). Therefore, 'gender' is social construction and 'sex' is biological construction. Sex is a determination made through the application of socially agreed upon biological criteria for classifying persons as females or males. The criteria for classification can be genitalia at birth or chromosomal typing before birth, and they do not necessarily agree with one another. Placement in a sex category is achieved through application of the sex criteria, but in everyday life, categorization is established and sustained by the socially required indemnificatory displays that proclaim one's membership in one or the other category. In this sense, one's sex category presumes one's sex and stands as proxy for it in many situations, but sex and sex category can vary independently; that is, it is possible to claim membership in a sex category even when the sex criteria are lacking. Gender, in contrast, is the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category. Gender activities emerge from and bolster claims to membership in a sex category (West and Zimmerman, 1987, p.127). The process of socialization of child plays vital role in gender construction in our society and it depend up person to person and family to family. How do we think about women in daily life in family and when we interact to each other such as interaction with sister, mother, niece or female relative in our family. The gender construction is shaped my social institution in our society such family, marriage, kinship and etc. Gender is also the product of social action in everyday life in our society. The differentiation between male and female start from family and then it spreads among all sphere of social life in human beings. The women always consider as subordinate. The gender discrimination is found in every place, every society either less extent and sometime huge extent. Such gender discrimination is very less prevalent among tribal people.

Girls continue to identify with their mothers, and so they grow up with fluid ego boundaries that make them sensitive, empathetic, and emotional. It is these qualities that make them potentially good mothers and keep them open men's

emotional needs. But because the men in their lives have developed personalities that make them emotionally guarded, women want to have children to bond with. Thus, psychological gendering of children is continually reproduced (Encyclopedia of Sociology, 2000, p.1058). This process of learning of women make them emotional and them shape as delicate, docile and caretakers in our society. Therefore, women have lots of social accountability and they have to follow their all social norms, values and ideas that are created only due to patriarchal mind set in society. The term social norms and values are value loaded on the women. According to Francis (2006,p.10), 'many 'first-wave' feminists pointed to the of socio-economic practices and expectation embedded in the legal system and in social conventions and institutions as constraining women's lives and behaviour. Education was seen as having a central role to play in perpetuating these inequities-both in terms of access (for example, female exclusion from educational sectors such as higher education, and from access to certain curriculum subjects),and from (e.g., the sorts of subjects girls were taught; teaching methods and expectations)'. The role of women is always evaluated inferior in comparison to male and all decision-making power is handled by male. The social, economic and also cultural values of women are not satisfactory in our society. Social character is tagged with women and their values are measure in term of character so women have to show good character and their moral values should be high. If they failed to perform these duties then their moral and character is consider as lower and bad. As result the regard and value are not satisfactory and male person don't talk with right manner and hurt by many people in their society. Therefore, there is urgent need to change this kind of stereotype thinking and ideology. We must remove patriarchal values system and should inculcate gender equality doctrine in our life.

Food:

Food is also part of culture. Food is varies culture to culture. Food is the most vital element for sustaining human being. Nobody can be survived without taking the food. Food can be categorized mainly two types-first is vegetarian food and other is called non-vegetarian food. As Dube (2000, p.159) writes, 'Food constitutes a critical element in the ritual idiom of purity and pollution. Women, key players in the process of socialization, are also the principal protagonists in this arena. The task of safeguarding food, averting danger, and in a broad sense, attending to the grammatical rules which govern the relational idiom of food, falls upon women. Women play a key role in maintaining the sanctity and purity of the home. Women tend to be more circumscribed in taking proscribed foods and accepting food from others. Women are more particular about commensally restrictions. The prescriptions and prohibitions for women regarding food are governed by principles of kinship, marriage, and sexuality. Upper caste women, who are meant to believe in the indissolubility of marriage as a value, for instance, are expected to change their lifestyle drastically after they are widowed. They are required to observe strict rules of purity and pollution while preparing food, give up the consumption of *tamsik* food-which raise passion and desire-and forego a 'proper' meal in the evenings'. So food is also governed by men and these special social norms are implemented on only women not men. Therefore, this kind of food is also considered as patriarchal mind set food in our society. Hence, women have no full freedom in social life in our patriarchal society so far.

Similarly, when girls achieve their puberty then some biological process starts in girls and this is called menstruation cycle(MC). This cycle occur in every month for three-five days normally in all girls. Menstruation starts in girl after getting age 11-13 years. This is also called adolescence period. The ritual ceremony is celebrated in South India in the case of first menstruation cycle starts in a girl. The common features of the celebration of the onset of puberty are confinement or seclusion of the girl for a certain number of days, arti to signify the auspiciousness of the occasion and to ward off evil, to which a menstruating girl is believed to be especially vulnerable, serving her special food. In Karnataka, at her first menstruation, a girl is fed dry food, coconut, milk, ghee, certain fruits, a mixture of jiggery and sesame-seeds, and also meat and chicken soups, among meat-eating groups. It is light of her emergent sexuality and prospective motherhood that the

special diet for a pubertal girl to be understood. Apart from eating nourishing food, the girl has to avoid particularly 'cold' and 'hot' food item. These regulations may extend over a period-from a few days to a few months, or to one or two years after the first menstruation. Menstruating girls are asked to not eat spicy food, pickles, and curds, and in general, to avoid very 'cold' and very 'hot foods' (Dube, 2000, pp.98-100).The menstruating girls are also discriminated in our society for sake of religious mindset in our society. The girls are just as tool for experiment of prohibition and restriction in our society. Girls have been suffering from many years ago this kind of gender discrimination at all. There is social stigma attached in menstruation period in Hindu religion. If women are in the menstruation period then they have to avoid to take participate in any religious ceremony and rites. Women are treated as untouchable in this period. As we know that menstruation period is most important phenomenon for human being. The existence of human being is not possible without menstruation. Therefore, we should give more attention to women while they suffer from this period and must give full protection to women. The stereotype type customs and ideology should be deny and rejected in our society. The women have to face many biological and physical problems during menstruation period so special attention must be given to women in this period. Women does not convey problem to male family member in this period but they would a little bit reveal among women family. Because it is customaries in our society and its perception is not good among male group and the male group consider menstruation as taboo things in our stereotypical society. This is our accountability to help in all circumstances to women at all and resolve their social stigma problems by disseminating knowledge and awareness in both groups male and female also. We should promote and accept scientifically valid reasons.

Curriculum:

The most common definition of curriculum derives from the word's Latin root, which means 'racecourse'.Indeed, for many students, the school curriculum is a race to be run, a series of obstacle or hurdles (subjects) to be passed. Today, school, documents, newspaper articles, committee reports, and many academic textbook refer to any and all subjects offered or prescribed as 'the curriculum of the school' (Marsh, 2006,pp.3-4).

Some definitions of curriculum are below:

- Curriculum is the 'permanent' subjects that embody essential knowledge.
- Curriculum is those subjects that are most useful for contemporary living.
- Curriculum is all planed leanings for which the school is responsible.
- Curriculum is the totality of learning experiences so that student can attain general skills and knowledge at a variety of learning sites.
- Curriculum is the questionings of authority and the searching for complex for views of human situations.

Therefore, curriculum is the source of all kinds of knowledge, views of human situations, learning experiences, general skills and questioning of authority. Curriculum is the assemble of all kinds of knowledge and experiences. Gender discrimination can be resolved by the curriculum. If curriculum is based on the doctrine of equality and free from gender bias then the textbooks plays vital roles in eliminating gender discrimination in textbooks. School textbook is an important instrument of pedagogy which could be used as a medium of gender sensitization, especially in a context where, there are neither gender-sensitive schools nor gender sensitized teachers. As Sleeter (2002, p.10) says, 'schools serve as an instrument of socialization of the young into society, the role of school curricula in shaping the consciousness of the young is important'. So schools and curriculum are part and parcel for students and it help in gender sensitization. Textbooks depower and empower at different moment.

According to Bhog (2002 p.1642), 'gender-sensitive material at the primary and secondary levels require in-puts from those who have struggled to bring women's voices, narratives, experiences and worldviews into the academic mainstream. Without this knowledge-base, those charged with rewriting texts will restrict themselves to superficial tinkering: either by increasing the number of times girls are visually or verbally represented in the books or by facile role-reversals'. Hence, these materials are sources of gender equality as well as gender sensitization. Apple (2000, p.187) says, 'what textbooks do, the social roles they play for different groups, is then very complicated. This has important implications not only for the politics of how and by whom textbooks are used, but for the politics of internal qualities, the content and organization of the text. It has an immense bearing on how people actually read and interpret the text, especially in a time of rightist resurgence.

Before National Curriculum Framework-2000(NCF), Sadgopal (2003) writes about textbooks of National Council of Education Research and Training, New Delhi (NCERT), 'The syllabi for languages, environmental studies or natural and social sciences also lack a gender perspective. The gender bias can be seen in the recently published NCERT textbooks, which refer to the contribution of women to Indian history and making of contemporary India only marginally. But after adopting NCF-2005, NCERT has tried to remove all aspect gender discrimination and gender bias in their textbooks.

According to Manjrekar (2003, p.4578), 'gendered access to educational facilities, sexism in school textbooks and stereotyping of curricular choices are issues that have been extensively examined by women's studies scholars. These are extremely important issues in themselves, but are not independent of other processes of schooling. Forms and representation of knowledge in school curricula reflect the discourses of formal education and the pattern of social relations in society - framing, normalising'

Schooling reinforces the gendered inequality of socialisation across divides. It is evident that the schooling of girls remains embedded in the societal context even though it provides an expanded space for growth to women. In fact, school curriculum and school become active instruments of cultural reproduction and social control without seeking to alter the informal and formal process of socialisation (*Position Paper, National Focus Group on Gender Issues in Education*, 2006, p.2).

The National Policy on Education, 1986 put specific emphasis on women's education. It states that:

"Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In order to neutralise accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well-conceived edge in favour of women. The National Education system will play a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women" (*Position Paper, National Focus Group on Gender Issues in Education*, 2006, p.1).

The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) 2000 has moved from the possibility of education becoming a means of empowerment for girls and women. Its gender specific role:

"Equality among sexes is a fundamental right under the Constitution of India. Besides making education accessible to more and more girls especially rural girls, removing all gender-discrimination and gender-bias in school curriculum is absolutely necessary. Moreover it will be most appropriate thing to recognise and nurture the best features of each gender in the best Indian tradition.

After all, India gave her women the right to vote without any prolonged battle for it, unlike in the west. There is a need to develop and implement gender inclusive and gender sensitive curricular strategies to nurture a generation of girls and boys who are equally competent and are sensitive to one another, and grow up in a caring and sharing mode as equals and not as adversaries" (*Position Paper, National Focus Group on Gender Issues in Education*, 2006, p.17).

The role of educational policy is very important in constructing and adopting the new kinds of syllabus and curriculum in the textbooks. The textbook and curriculum is based on the principles gender equality. Textbook and curriculum have tried to remove all kinds of gender prejudices and bias from their textbook. Whenever, there is need to amendments in policy of

education later the committees are formed and finally draft of new educational policy is made. So committee try to resolve previous drawback in new policy. Therefore, educational policy plays vital role for making healthy and gender equality textbooks.

Finally, gender discrimination should be vanished at all. The patriarchal mind set should be removed from our society. The food culture must be equal for both male and women. The textbook and curriculum play vital role in encouraging the women empowerment and also try to remove all kinds of gender bias in the curriculum. It increases gender sensitisation among all groups in our society. The effect of curriculum and textbook is more than other source because we learn all things from textbook and then we follow the idea of textbook. If textbook is free from gender prejudices and bias then the students and teachers will also adopt right decision in their family and society. Then our society would be considered as free from all kinds of gender discrimination and gender biases. The status of women will be better by incorporation of gender equality.

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