



**GENDER-DISCRIMINATION, TRIBAL PEOPLE AND EDUCATION IN INDIA:
A CASE FOR REFLECTIONS AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTIONS**

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This article aims to discuss the cardinal issues of gender discrimination, its various types, status of women in India including status of tribal people and tribal women in India. Finally, an effort has been made to explore the role of education in removing such discrimination across the world in general and in India in particular.

(1).Gender Discrimination

Gender discrimination has been defined as follows;

It is, “a situation in which someone is treated less well because of their sex, usually when a woman is treated less well than a man.”

(<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/gender-discrimination>).

"Discrimination on grounds of sex or gender; sexual discrimination."

(https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/gender_discrimination) .

Moral philosophers have defined discrimination; as *disadvantageous* treatment or consideration. This is a comparative definition. An individual need not be actually harmed in order to be discriminated against. They just need to be treated *worse* than others for some arbitrary reason. If someone decides to donate to help orphan children, but decides to donate less, say, to black children out of a racist attitude, then they would be acting in a discriminatory way even though the people they discriminate against are actually benefited by having some money donated to them.

1.1. Types of Discrimination

"Based on realistic-conflict theory and social-identity theory, Rubin and Hewstone have highlighted a distinction among three types of discrimination:

1. *Realistic competition* is driven by self-interest and is aimed at obtaining material resources (e.g., food, territory, customers) for the in-group (e.g., favoring an in-group in order to obtain more resources for its members, including the self).
2. *Social competition* is driven by the need for self-esteem and is aimed at achieving a positive social status for the in-group relative to comparable out-groups (e.g., favoring an in-group in order to make it better than an out-group).
3. *Consensual discrimination* is driven by the need for accuracy and reflects stable and legitimate inter-group status hierarchies (e.g., favoring a high-status in-group because it is high status). (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discrimination>).

The types of discrimination are: Age, Caste, Disability, Employment ,Language ,Nationality,Race or ethnicity, Religious beliefs, Gender , etc .

(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discrimination>).

1.2. The United Nations' stance on discrimination includes the statement: "Discriminatory behaviors take many forms, but they all involve some form of exclusion or

rejection." International bodies United Nations Human Rights Council work towards helping ending discrimination around the world." (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discrimination>).

1.3. The Spread of Discrimination

"Discrimination based on gender (or sex) is a common civil rights violation that takes many forms, including sexual harassment, pregnancy discrimination, and unequal pay for women who do the same job as men." Gender discrimination occurs when a person is subjected to different or unequal treatment

("discrimination") in any number of situations, when that treatment is based on the person's gender." (<http://civilrights.findlaw.com/discrimination/gender-discrimination.html>.)

"Gender based discrimination against female children is pervasive in many parts of the world and observed in all the strata of society, manifesting in various forms. Quite often, a female child has been treated inferior to male child and this is deeply engraved in the mind of the female child. This is more predominant in India as well as other lesser developed countries. Sex selection before birth and neglect of the female child after birth, in childhood and during the teenage years, has outnumbered males to females in India and also in countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh and South Korea. There are 1029 women per 1000 men in North America and 1076 women per 1000 men in Europe but there are only 927 women per 1000 men in India. Women have a biological advantage over men for longevity and survival, yet there are more men than women. The figures above support that gender discrimination of female child is a basic facility area. Though the demographic characteristics do not show much or in some cases, anti-female bias, there is always a woman who receives a small piece of the pie.

There are two main inequalities as pointed out by Prof. Amartya Sen: Educational Inequality and Health Inequality. These are the indicators of a woman's status of welfare. In India irrespective of the caste, creed, religion and social status, the overall status of a woman is lower than men and therefore a male child is preferred over a female child. A male child is considered a blessing and his birth is celebrated as opposed to a female child where her birth is

not celebrated and is considered more of a burden. Therefore, education and health care of the female child in India is an important social indicator to measure equality between men and women.

According to the 2001 Indian census, overall male-female ratio was 927 females per 1000 males. However, the 2011 Indian census shows that there are 914 females per 1000 males. During the last decade the number female children to male children in the youngest age group fell from 945 per 1000 males to 927 per 1000 males."

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discrimination_against_girls_in_India)

1.4 Discrimination against Girls and Women

"Discrimination against girls and women in the developing world, is a devastating reality. It results in millions of individual tragedies, which add up to lost potential for entire countries. Studies show there is a direct link between a country's attitude toward women and its progress socially and economically. The status of women is central to the health of a society. If one part suffers, so does the whole. Tragically, female children are most defenseless against the trauma of gender discrimination. But the good news is that new generations of girls represent the most promising source of change for women—and men—in the developing world today."

(<http://childreninneed.com/magazine/gender.html>)

(2) The Status of Women in India

"The status of **women in India** has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. With a decline in their status from the ancient to medieval times, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been eventful. In modern India, women have held high offices including that of the President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Leader of Opposition, Union Ministers, Chief Ministers and Governors."

Women's rights are secured under the Constitution of India — mainly, equality, dignity, and freedom from discrimination; further, India has various statutes governing the rights of women....

However, women in India continue to face numerous problems, including violent victimization through rape, acid throwing, dowry killings, and the forced prostitution of young girls." (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_India)

2.1. Gender Discrimination in India

"In India, discriminatory attitude towards men and women have existed for generations and effect

the lives of both genders. Although the constitution of India has granted men and women equal rights, gender disparity still remains. Gender discrimination violates human rights. These are mostly seen in family land sharing among sisters and brothers.

There is specific research on gender discrimination mostly in favour of men over women. Women are perceived to be disadvantaged at work. Indian laws on Rape, Dowry and Adultery have women's safety at heart, but these highly discriminatory practices are still taking place at an alarming rate.

The cultural construct of Indian society which reinforces gender bias against men and women, with varying degrees and variable contexts against the opposite sex, has led to the continuation of India's strong preference for male children. Female infanticide and sex-selective abortion is adopted and strongly reflects the low status of Indian women. Census 2011 shows decline of girl population (as a percentage to total population) under the age of seven, with activists estimating that eight million female fetuses may have been aborted in the past decade. The 2005 census shows infant mortality figures for females and males are 61 and 56, respectively, out of 1000 live births, with females more likely to be aborted than males due to biased attitudes.

A decline in the child sex ratio (0–6 years) was observed with India's 2011 census reporting that it stands at 914 females against 1,000 males, dropping from 927 in 2001 - the lowest since

India's independence. The demand for sons among wealthy parents is being satisfied by the medical community through the provision of illegal service of fetal sex-determination and sex-selective abortion. The financial incentive for physicians to undertake this illegal activity seems to be far greater than the penalties associated with breaking the law.

Although literacy rates are increasing, female literacy rate lags behind the male literacy rate. Literacy for females stands at 65.46%, compared to 82.14% for males. An underlying factor for such low literacy rates are parents' perceptions that education for girls are a waste of resources as their daughters would eventually live with their husbands' families and they will not benefit directly from the education investment." (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_discrimination_in_India).

2.2 .Gender Inequality in India

It "refers to health, education, economic and political inequalities between men and women in India. Various international gender inequality indices rank India differently on each of these factors, as well as on a composite basis, and these indices are controversial. Gender inequalities, and its social causes, impact India's sex ratio, women's health over their lifetimes, their educational attainment, and economic conditions. Gender inequality in India is a multifaceted issue that concerns men and women alike. Some argue that some gender equality measures, place men at a disadvantage. However, when India's population is examined as a whole, women are at a disadvantage in several important ways.

2.3. Educational Inequalities in India

2.3.1. Schooling

India is on target to meet its Millennium Development Goal of gender parity in education by 2015. UNICEF's measure of attendance rate and Gender Equality in Education Index (GEEI) capture the quality of education. Despite some gains, India needs to triple its rate of improvement to reach GEEI score of 95% by 2015 under the Millennium Development Goal .In rural India girls continue to be less educated than the boys. According to a 1998 report by U.S.

Department of Commerce, the chief barrier to female education in India are inadequate school facilities (such as sanitary facilities), shortage of female teachers and gender bias in curriculum (majority of the female characters being depicted as weak and helpless vs. strong, adventurous, and intelligent men with high prestige jobs)

2.3.2. Literacy

Though it is gradually rising, the female literacy rate in India is lower than the male literacy rate. According to Census of India 2011, literacy rate of females is 65.46% compared to males which is 82.14%. Compared to boys, far fewer girls are enrolled in the schools, and many of them drop out. According to the National Sample Survey Data of 1997, only the states of Kerala and Mizoram have approached universal female literacy rates. According to majority of the scholars, the major factor behind the improved social and economic status of women in Kerala is literacy. From 2006-2010, the percent of females who completed at least a secondary education was almost half that of men, 26.6% compared to 50.4%. In the current generation of youth, the gap seems to be closing at the primary level and increasing in the secondary level. In rural Punjab, the gap between girls and boys in school enrollment increases dramatically with age as demonstrated in National Family Health Survey-3 where girls age 15-17 in Punjab are 10% more likely than boys to drop out of school. Although this gap has been reduced significantly, problems still remain in the quality of education for girls where boys in the same family will be sent to higher quality private schools and girls sent to the government school in the village.

2.3.4. Reservations for female students

Under Non-Formal Education programme, about 40% of the centres in states and 10% of the centres in UTs are exclusively reserved for females. As of 2000, about 0.3 million NFE centres were catering to about 7.42 million children, out of which about 0.12 million were exclusively for girls. Certain state level engineering, medical and other colleges like in Orissa have reserved 30% of their seats for females.... Although India had witnessed substantial improvements in female literacy and enrolment rate since the 1990s, the quality of education for female remains to be heavily compromised as the country continues to hold greater value for male than female."

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_inequality_in_India#Education_inequalities).

2.3.5. Discrimination against girls in India

Experts often argue that women's education is the key to reducing discrimination against girls. However, female literacy rate has risen from 15 to 54%, even as the juvenile sex ratio has fallen. Some studies have shown that educated mothers are far more "efficient" in discriminating against their daughters than uneducated mothers. Other studies have shown that though higher levels of maternal education decreases infant mortality for both boys and girls, the effect is larger for girls. Thus, higher levels of maternal education decrease gender differentials in child mortality. On the other hand, there is also evidence that maternal education at the district and household levels is weakly associated with increases in female survival. At a macro level, regions with high female literacy states- Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Goa have shown less discrimination towards girls. However, in the past 20 years, high female literacy has not stopped Delhi, Gujarat and Rajasthan from showing increased discrimination against girls.

The female child in India is often deprived of her right of an education. The number of girls dropping out of school far exceeds the boys because girls are expected to help at home, either with household work like washing and cooking or with taking care of younger siblings. Since girls spend more time performing domestic duties and this increases the gap between female and male equality in rural parts of India, it perpetuates the myth that education is of no help to the girl and her primary job will be to look after the household work, get married early, have children and then raise them. If this is the job she has to do, then education is of no importance to her and it is not imparted. Also, even with education and financial independence, women might not get the same rights and liberties which a man may have. It is through education in the early days of a child that we can bring about behavior changes and open doors to opportunities that will enhance their confidence, personality, and career. Often in these communities, women, in particular, are considered an inferior sex and are raised to accept this belief. Nearly 80% of the girls drop out from standards I to V. Out of the 100 girls that enroll in the first year of school, only 42 reach class V. Among SC and ST many of those who live below poverty line, only 19

of the 100 girls reach class V. Many of these girls work in the unorganized sectors, such as the beedi industry.... The beedi sector represents the gender division of labor because most of the women and girls sitting at home do the beedi making, and boys are not involved in it.

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discrimination_against_girls_in_India).

2.3.6. State initiatives to reduce gender inequality

"Different states and union territories of India, in cooperation with the central government, have initiated a number of region-specific programs targeted at women to help reduce gender inequality over the 1989-2013 period. Some of these programs include Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana, Sampurna Gramin Rozgar Yojana, Awareness Generation Projects for Rural and Poor women, Condensed Course of Education for Adult Women, Kishori Shakti Yojana, Swayamsidha Mahila Mandal Programme, Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women, Swawalamban Programme, Swashakti Project, Swayamsidha Scheme, Mahila Samakhya Programme,¹Integrated Child Development Services, Balika Samridhi Yojana, National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (to encourage rural girls to attend primary school daily), National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level, Sarva Shiksha Aabyhiyan, Ladli Laxmi Yojana, Delhi Ladli Scheme and others.

Bombay High Court, recently in March 2016 has given a judgment that "Married daughters are also obligated to take care of their parents". This is a very bold step towards breaking the traditional

norms of the defined roles in the society. Also this shall also motivate women to be more independent not only for themselves but also for their parents.

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_inequality_in_India#Education_inequalities)

(3) Status of Tribal in India

"The share of the Scheduled Tribe population in urban areas is a meager 2.4%. Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Chhatisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, and Karnataka are the States having larger number of Scheduled Tribes. These states account for 83.2% of the total Scheduled Tribe population of the country. Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Jammu & Kashmir, Tripura, Mizoram, Bihar, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu, account for another 15.3% of the total Scheduled Tribe population. The share of the remaining states / UTs is negligible.

As per the Census 2001, total population of the Scheduled Castes in the country (excluding the population of Mao Maram, Paomata and Purul sub-divisions of Senapati district of Manipur) is 166,635,700 which constitute 16.2% of the total population. Uttar Pradesh (35,148,377) has the largest Scheduled Caste population, followed by West Bengal (18,452,555) and Bihar (13,048,608). These states, along with Andhra Pradesh Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Punjab comprise the group of 'top ten' states in terms of large Scheduled Caste population in the country. In Nagaland, Lakshdweep, and A & N Islands, no Scheduled Caste is notified. Total population of Scheduled Tribes is 84,326,240 as per the Census 2001 which accounts for 8.2% of the total population of country. Majority of these tribe population live in rural areas and their population is 10.4 % of the total rural population of the country."

(http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/scheduled_castes_and_scheduled_tribes.aspx)

3.1. Literary among tribal people in India

"In India, the literacy rate increased from 8.53 percent in 1961 to 58.96 percent in 2011 for STs, while the corresponding increase of the total population was from 28.30 percent in 1961 to 72.99 percent in 2011."

(<http://tribal.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/ScheduledTribesData/Section2.pdf>).

3.2. Status of tribal women in India

"Tribal people or 'adivasis', as they are popularly known as a symbol of self-assertion, comprise of around 8.2 per cent of the national population. The tribal people are concentrated mostly in the central belt of India and parts of the North-East. The status of women in the tribal societies is comparatively better than that of the women in general society—apparently so. The sex ratio of the tribes in India during 1991 showed 971 females per 1000 males while it was 927 females among the general population. Mitra and Singh ... write that discrimination against women, occupational differentiation, and emphasis on status and hierarchical social ordering that characterize the predominant Hindu culture are generally absent among the tribal groups. Bhasin (2007) also writes that though tribes too have son preference, they do not discriminate against girls by female infanticide or sex determination tests.

The status of tribal women can be judged mainly by the roles they play in society. Their roles are determined to a large extent through the system of descent. The families try to pass their property by the line of descent. The family surnames too are traced on the basis of the system of descent. In an 'unilineal' system the descent is traced either through the male or female line. When the descent is traced through the mother's line, it is called a 'matrilineal' system and when it is traced through the father's line, it is called a patrilineal system. Most of the tribes in India follow a patrilineal system. There are exceptional cases like the Khasi, Jaintia, Garo and Lalung of Meghalaya in the North-East who follow the matrilineal system. The Mappilas of Kerala too are a matrilineal community. There are very rare cases of bilineal descent.

The status of a person quite often depends on the system of authority he/she enjoys in the community. When the authority is held through the male line, it is called 'patriarchy' and when it is held through the female line, it is called 'matriarchy'. Quite frequently one mixes up 'descent' with 'authority'. Not surprisingly, the Khasis are often believed to follow matriarchy. But in reality though the property is inherited through the mother's line, the final authority of the household vests with the mother's brother.

The position of a woman to a large extent depends on the kind of family one is placed in. In a joint family system the eldest woman usually enjoys a prerogative in the decision-making process. The type of family differs to a large extent with the type of marriage prevalent in the community. The nuclear family formed through monogamy is the most common type of family prevalent in the tribal communities in India. The extended type of family is also quite a common norm wherein the daughters leave the natal home after marriage to distant places. The older sons too leave the parents after marriage to set up new homes in the near vicinity. It is common to find the youngest son residing with the parents even after marriage....Some of the tribes in India enter into polygamy." (J.J Roy Burman).(www.mainstreamweely.net/article3314.html.)

4. The Role of Education in Removing Gender Discrimination

Having discussed the vital issue of gender discrimination, we are faced with the following pertinent questions:

1. How can education be used as an effective tool for eradicating gender discrimination?
2. What can the stakeholders in education practically do to realize the goal of Gender Discrimination Free Society at large ?
3. How can research based on empirical evidence be employed for designing a suitable action -plan for the above stated goal?

We all ought to address these issues at the earliest if we wish to live in a harmonious and just world.

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