



Image
of
Women
and
Curriculum
in
English



राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

**IMAGE OF WOMEN
AND
CURRICULUM IN ENGLISH**

IMAGE OF WOMEN
and
CURRICULUM IN ENGLISH

(A Book of Readings)

Editor

DR. INDIRA KULSHRESHTHA



राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
National Council of Educational Research and Training
New Delhi—110016

September 1986

Bhadra 1908

2.5 T

©National Council of Educational Research and Training 1986

Cover Design : Chhaya Pant

Price : Rs. 6.05



Published at the Publication Department by the Secretary, National Council of Educational Research and Training, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi 110016 and Printed at Swatantra Bharat Press, Esplanade Road, Delhi-110006 (India)

I ask no favours to my sex. I Surrender not our claim to equality. All I ask our brethren is that they will take their feet off our necks

—Sarah Grimke,
Letters on the Equality of Sexes,
1838

Foreword

The New Policy on Education emphasises education which would give women their rightful place in society. It is proposed that the National Education System will play a positive role and will foster the development of new values through re-designed curricula, textbooks, training and orientation of teachers, decision-makers and administrators, and the active involvement of educational institutions.

NCERT has already taken steps in this direction. Besides identifying values commensurate with the status of women through curriculum at different school stages, it has launched a project on elimination of sex-bias from language text-books and other instructional materials. The present volume covers a substantial ground on education for Women's equality and will be useful not only to educational planners, but also to the textbook writers and teachers.

I must compliment the experts who contributed to the development of this volume. I particularly appreciate the efforts of Dr. Indira Kulshreshtha for planning and coordinating the entire project.

Our efforts will be rewarded if authors and teachers react to this material and make constructive suggestions for further improvement.

August 7, 1986

P.L. Malhotra
Director

Preface

This book contains scholarly writings on issues concerning the projection of values commensurate with status of women through the curriculum in English. Important issues which need consideration while planning the policies, framing the curriculum, writing the textual materials and taking administrative decisions for their implementation, are dealt with in detail.

The book has been organized in three parts. The first part deals with general perspectives on the status of women providing the reader with a historical and conceptual background. The second part gives suggestions for incorporating these ideas in the language curriculum at the school level and also touches upon the role of the administrator in affecting the status of women through the school curriculum. The third part offers guidelines for the writers of textbooks and supplementary readers. It offers some useful suggestions for the teachers as well.

I am grateful to the authors who have been able to spare time to write these valuable papers. Thanks are also due to Dr. Indira Kulshreshtha, Reader in English and the Project-Director who conceived the idea, and gave it a concrete shape. I hope, this effort will go a long way in promoting the cause of women's education.

August 8, 1986

Snehlata Shukla
Head of the Department of Teacher
Education, Special Education &
Extension Services

Editorial Note

The use of the word 'man' has troubled critical scholars, careful translators and lawyers. There are difficulties whenever the the context gives no indication whether 'man' means just a human being irrespective of sex, or means a masculine being and no one else. The exclusion of women from the man made world does not change by the contention that the word 'man' is generic, meant to include both the sexes. One has to consider many factors such as the fact that the child learns to identify its own sex at a very early age—much before the child becomes aware of race, nationality or the class or society it belongs to. By the time the girl is about three to four years of age she 'knows' that she is a girl and will grow into a woman as the boy 'knows' that he is a boy and will become a man.

A successful identity of sex includes learning a correct language e.g., 'I am a girl' or 'you are a boy'. Both the boy and the girl should know that words like adults, children, officers, workers etc. apply to females as well. But there has been an invisibility of woman. She has been excluded from much of world except from the domestic chores, sex symbols and service situations which puts her in the sidelines of life. Many a time the role of women is not adequately brought out in the school textbooks. The picture which emerges from these texts is more often than not one of a traditional house wife doing all the domestic chores with occasional reference to her as a sex symbol and mainly occupying a very inconspicuous position.

Obviously it is no light matter to bring about an attitudinal change in social outlook which may ultimately correct the above bias. The change implies reversal of process and the effort that has gone into building of it for centuries.

School-going children are mostly exposed to the printed reading material in the form of textbooks and supplementary readers. The seeds that are sown at the tender age will bloom into flowers when they grow. This is the time when their unpolluted minds need refreshing breeze. This effort will need an attempt on the part of the textbook writers, teachers, and parents to treat children at par with each other without having any bias.

In order to develop certain guidelines for the textbook writers, curriculum planners and educational administrators a group of experts was approached and papers were invited on various issues. The response was heartening. I take this opportunity of extending my grateful thanks to all of them for being so co-operative. Thanks are also due to Shri M.M. Joshi, Principal, Asan Memorial Senior Secondary School, Madras for providing us the venue for vetting group meeting to discuss and finalize these papers. My grateful thanks are also due to Dr. (Miss) Rama Singh U.G.C., Professor in Hindi, for working with us as an expert and giving her valuable suggestions.

This book is an humble gift of the NCERT for the cause of women's education in India. We hope that it will provide some insight and guidance to the text-book writers, curriculum planners and educational administrators, and if it really does so, we would feel that we have laid the stepping stone.

Indira Kulshreshtha
Reader in English &
Project Director

August 11, 1986.

Contents

(i) Foreword	(vii)
(ii) Preface	(ix)
(iii) Editorial Note	(xi)

PART I : THE CONTEXT

1. Status of Women : An Introduction	
<i>Dr. Indira Kulshreshtha</i>	1
2. Status of Women in Indian Society	
<i>Dr. R.S. Vatsa.</i>	12

PART II : THE SCOPE

1. Language and Women	<i>P.N. Sahi</i>	29
2. Status of Women in Language Teaching	<i>Ashok Kumar Mathur</i>	34
3. Status of Women through the Language Curriculum	<i>Jaya Venugopal</i>	39
4. Status of Women in the Language Curriculum : An Administrative Outlook	<i>M.M. Joshi</i>	44
5. Role of Administrator in affecting the Status of Women through School Curriculum	<i>Renu Kaul</i>	52

PART III : THE FORMAT

1. Status of Women in the Teaching of English at the Upper Primary Stage *Ashok Mathur* 59
2. Establishing Equal Status of Women through Teaching of English in Indian Schools at the Upper Primary Stage *Mira V. Dave* 66
3. Status of Women through the Teaching of English at the Secondary and Senior Secondary Stages. *R.L. Gupta* 74

**PART I
THE CONTEXT**

The Status of Women : An Introduction

Dr. Indira Kulshreshtha

He was giggling. There was a twinkle in his eyes. There was a smile on his lips. Happiness was radiating from his face. She was looking at him earnestly. Pride was written all over her. Suddenly he clinched his fists and turned over. Instantly she picked him up and kissed his chubby cheeks. Her heart burst out with love.....she was a mother.

She looked out of the window and saw him coming— his steps staggering and his hands hanging. She felt her heart melting within. She wanted to love him, to console him, to touch his hands with her thin, frail fingers and to wipe out stains of worries from his face. Just then he entered the house. Before she could say a word, he shouted in disgust : “What are you staring at? Haven’t you seen me earlier?” Her face fell. Her enthusiasm subdued. Her feelings and emotions shattered. All of a sudden she wanted to get away from his house.

“You lazy creature ! Can’t you get me even a glass of water ?” ...She heard him screaming. Her heart nearly sank. Where could she go ? Tears welled up in her eyes. As she

walked slowly towards the kitchen, she tried to reconcile with the situation...she was a wife.

She found him on the terrace. He was reading a thick book and was deeply engrossed in it. As she placed the cup of coffee before him, he looked up. She gave him a tearful smile. Quietly he started sipping the coffee. She looked at the book and a pang of sorrow cut through her heart..... if only she could also..... but, she fought with her own feelings of jealousy, and scolded herself :

“Don’t be silly ! ‘He’ has to go to the college. ‘He’ has to...‘He’ is a boy !”..... She was a sister.

She tiptoed into his office. He was busy looking into the files, marking them here and there, signing those papers and and putting them in the tray. She stood there, watching him intently. He felt her presence and looked at her. “What do you want, baby ?”

Her face grew crimson. She stammered...“no...nothing”.

“O.K. then ! Now run along. Let me work. Will you ?

She nodded her head and withdrew herself, though she wanted to tell him that she adored him, that she wanted to become an engineer, an architect, or a designer...but only yesterday he had told her :

“Look here baby, I can’t afford to send two children for such technical training. Sudhir’s education is already a big burden on my shoulders”....She was a daughter.

She was tired after the day’s work. Her fingers were aching as she had been typing endlessly to complete the urgent assignment. It was past six, and there was no sign of a bus. She was worried about her little, tiny daughter whom she had left at home. She glanced at her wrist watch. Six twenty.....

Just then, there was a quick movement beside her. She looked around and found that the man standing behind her was pushing her aside so that he could get into the bus. She resisted.....

“You came after me. Come in the queue”. But her voice got lost..... She was still struggling to get into the bus while the man had already disappeared inside. With a sigh, she waited for the other bus to come.

When she reached home, it was dark. She could hear the grumbling....

“This woman doesn’t care even for the child ! God only knows what she is so proud of !”

She was tired, exhausted and desperately needed a cup of tea.....but she had so many other things to do first, to feed the baby, to hand over her salary to them...

While she was still struggling to settle down with the child, she handed over the pay-packet. “There are fifty rupees short in your salary What did you do with them ?” Came the question like a bombshell.

“I.....I have given it to Rajiv !

“How dare you give money to that beggar brother of yours ? Isn’t he ashamed of asking his married sister for it ?”

Tears stung her eyes....She was a daughter-in-law.

Yes, she looked smart. She could take dictation. She could type well and over and above, she was young and beautiful. He put his cigar aside, looked into his diary, and with a broad smile he got up and said.

“Sit down baby. Today I shall give you another test”.

She sat on the chair with pen and pad ready in her hands. She felt his fingers on her shoulders. She froze. What is he up to ?

“Don’t be scared. You have worked so hard, you need to relax.....His hands were still moving.....she shudderedbut she was reminded of her sick mother...her invalid father.....her hungry brothers and sisters.....she needed this job.....and she felt the snakes crawling over her.....she had to tolerate this humiliation.....she was a woman.

Yes, these are the realities of a woman’s life in society today. If someone has to sacrifice, if someone has to live for others, if someone has only to give and not to get anything, it is the woman and woman alone. The day she is born she is considered to be a liability, and a curse. The day she gets married, she is treated differently if she cannot bring the desired dowry with her, and when she grows old, the sons take her as a burden and she has to work at home like an old maid to help their wives.

Throughout the Vedic period woman was given the status equal to man. She participated in sacrificial rites, performing ‘Yagnas’ and was man’s equal in upholding ‘dharma’. She could fight wars ; go to the battlefield, like Kaikeyi, join in festivals and take part in philosophical discussions like Gargi and Maitreyi ; or even remain unmarried if she so desired.

But, with the passage of time her position deteriorated and her status degraded. The Manusmriti, firmly and finally, pushed her into her new and eternally dependent role :

“Day and night women must be kept in dependence by the males (of) their families.....Her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth, and her sons protect (her) in old age ; a woman is never fit for independence”¹.

¹Manusmirti XI : Verses 2 and 3 ; Max Muller : reprint 1964, pp. 327-28.

It is interesting to note that the Confucian thought on the subject is almost identical :

“To be a woman is to submit”².....The Three Obediences ordained that a woman was to be dependent on her father as a child, on her husband as a married woman and on her son as a widow”³.

The Assyrian scribes of 1100 BC had already said the same thing. Woman was expected to be under the rule of her father, “who was free to settle her in marriage exactly as he thought fit”⁴.

The early medieval society in Germany acknowledged the complete control of the husband on his wife as his right, known as the right of “mundium”⁵. Here a woman was passed on from the father’s hand to that of the husband, and this ‘right’ included the authority to beat her, though not to mutilate or kill her.

“It is sometimes claimed that men are the natural protectors of women. Are they ? Who is it that women fear on loney roads at night, the members of their own sex or of that which claim to be their natural rotectors ? Any observer of the world knows, that while men may be very good protectors for the women of their own families, they are often very poor protectors for the women of other men’s families”⁶

However, Manu was no women hater, for he has said, “Where women are honoured : there the gods are pleased, where they are not honoured, no sacred rites yield rewards”⁷.

²The Book of Rites.

³As quoted by K.P. Gupta in *China Report*, 1975.

⁴Vern and Bonnie Bullough : *The Subordinate Sex*: 1974. London : University of Illinois Press P. 22.

⁵Ibid. p, 155 (munt means hand)

⁶Lillie Devereux, *Women’s Place Today*, 1883.

⁷Girija Khanna, “*Indian Women Today*” New Delhi Vikas Publishing House, p. 2.

Manu opposed the purchase of a woman, and never gave sanction to such marriage. Even though he advocated child-marriage, he did warn the fathers not to give away their daughters to man devoid of good qualities.

When India witnessed the advent of Buddhism, there was welcome change in the position of women in society, for Buddhism allowed women to be educated, to travel as missionaries, and even to remain unmarried. But, at the same time, it considered women as evil to be avoided by men.

The situation changed for worse with Muslim invasions jeopardising the security of women as they were often carried away by the invaders. It further narrowed down the social liberties of women and 'Jauhar' and 'Sati Pratha' became more acceptable to women than to be slaves or marry into the homes of invaders.

At the dawn of the British rule, the position of women was in a sorry state. The Vedic liberties enjoyed by women were long forgotten. It was at that time that Raja Ram Mohan Roy raised his voice against 'Sati Pratha'.

After centuries of social stagnation and due to the pressing social, cultural, economic and political factors, the Indian women have shown an urge to come back to the mainstream of social life. The freedom movement marked a new era in the awakening of Indian Women. The sheer desire to take part in the life around, to be a part and parcel of the changing society was a great comeback for Indian women. It certainly helped them to regain their rightful place in the society.

With Independence, the Indian women came to be granted equal status with men. The government made all possible efforts to raise their status in various fields through such measures as compulsory education, Hindu Marriage Act, abolition of child-marriage, dowry prohibition, etc. Even the Constitution made provision for equal rights to men as

well as women, irrespective of sex and other considerations. Yet, these efforts do not seem to have made much impact.

Man and woman, in fact, are complementary to one another, and this would be a different world if only both of them could lead a harmonious life, working not in confrontation, but in co-operation. If only women were also provided with equal opportunities in all walks of life, the picture would have been very different. The double standards of men have brought women to the crossroads where they stand helplessly not knowing what is expected of them. Ernestine said :

"Humanity recognizes no sex ; mind recognizes no sex ; life and death, pleasure and pain, happiness and misery recognize no sex. Like man, woman comes involuntarily into existence ; like him, she possesses physical and mental and moral powers.....like him she has to pay the penalty for disobeying nature's laws, and far greater penalties she has to suffer from ignorance.....like man she also enjoys or suffers with her country. Yet she is not recognized as his equal."⁸

But, perhaps now, in the wake of women's movement in India and with the advent of the International year of Women a decade ago, people are beginning to regard the idea of woman's equality with man not only a political but also a social truth.

Indian Women have done, and are still doing extraordinary and wonderful things. History, literature, religion and politics are full of examples of such women who have inspired others. The last three decades have definitely brought a remarkable change in their attitudes.

The thoroughly domesticated women who could not think beyond the welfare of their families have now awakened to

⁸Ernestine L. Rose. Second National Convention. Friends of Women Suffrage 1851, *History of woman Suffrage*, 1, 1881.

their wider role in society. There have been many factors responsible for it, the first and foremost being the country's independence leading to a fair deal for all men and women. Social reforms in the country have made women aware of the social injustice they had been subjected to. Educational opportunities which atleast a few of them were able to take advantage of, set another phase in their march towards progress. Employment facilities also have contributed to their so-called economic independence. Economic emancipation has made them as important as men in contributing to the family income.

The modern Indian man's attitude towards women has also altered and has thus created a climate where the status of women can be improved. He is no more satisfied with a woman who can be a mere housewife. He too wants an intelligent companion to share his various interests in life. He has realized that better position for women in society will elevate the status of his entire house-hold, family and ultimately of the community.

Of all these factors, education has played the greatest role in bringing about this change. The better a woman's education, the greater the availability of social opportunities. This also kindles in women the desire to explore all the opportunities, which in turn brings about change in their attitude. This change of attitude results in conflict with the existing institutions, restraints and social taboos. It means they are prepared to accept challenges-social and political. And once they have this strength and desire, their status is bound to improve.

Now, education of women does not merely mean to make them literates. It is expected to make them fit for social revolution, to understand their own problems, and to make them capable of solving them. For this the educationists don't have to be feminists. Women don't have to develop an attitude of confrontation with men. Let us ask the question : education for what ?

"Women like men, must be educated with a view to action or their studies can not be called education, and no judgement can be formed of the scope of their faculties. The pursuit must be life's business, or it will be mere pastime or irksome task".⁹

If we wish our women to stand side by side with men, walk hand in hand with them, or if we wish that they may compete with men, they must be given the same training as men, without any bias. If girls as well as boys are going to enter industrial life, they must be trained to enter it with self respect :

Mary Ann Radcliffe once remarked :

"How far the wife was intended to be the slave to her husband, I know not ; but certain we are, she was designed to be his friend, his companion, and united part ; or according to the gentleman's phrase, his 'better part' and yet how often do we see her sinking under the burden of household load, whilst the unfeeling husband is lavishing away the substance which ought to be the comfort and support of family."¹⁰

It is ridiculous to find how language itself discriminates between the two sexes. A good portion of language is designed to degrade women, eg.,

"Words like 'old maid' and 'spinster' as opposed to 'bachelor' and 'play boy' illustrate how we view women who do not choose to marry or who miss out on the chance if they want it"¹¹.

Or,

⁹Hariet Martinean : Letter to Paulina Wright Davis, Second National Convention, Friends of Women suffrage, 1851. *History of Woman Suffrage*, 1-1981,

¹⁰Mary Ann Radcliffe, *The Female Advocate*, 1799.

¹¹Charlotte Holt Clinbell ; *Meet Me in the Middle*, 1973.

“For at least some speakers, the more demeaning the job, the more the person holding it (if female, of course) is likely to be described as a ‘lady’. Thus ‘Cleaning lady’ is at least as common as ‘cleaning woman’ ‘saleslady’ as ‘sales women’ : But one says normally ‘Woman doctor.’”¹²

Or

“...it is one thing to be an ‘old master’ like Hans Halbein, and another to be an ‘old mistress,’”¹³ and so on.

All that we need to do to give women what they have been deprived of and to inculcate in them is a sense of self-respect. They need to be self-propelled, able to take decisions on their own and then to act on them. But on the other hand men too need to realize that no work on earth is small and no human being inferior. Let us see that no woman feels the “degradation of being a woman, not the degradation of being what ‘God’ made woman, but what ‘man’ has made of her.”¹⁴

It is time that the curriculum planners, textbook writers and language teachers pause and give a thought to the issues pertaining to the status of women and decide :

- (a) How to bring about a change in existing value systems in the society to improve the status of women ?
- (b) How to ensure the spirit of co-operation, and not of confrontation between boys and girls through the language curriculum at the school stage ?

A team of the three—the curriculum planner, the textbook writer (including supplementary readers) and the teacher of English can play an active and important role in realising the major ideas, objectives and values commensurate with the status of women by way of developing appropriate attitudes

¹²Robin Lakoff : *Language and Woman’s Place* 1975.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Lydia Maria Child, letter to Angelina Grinke, 1838, in Miriam Gurko. *The Ladies of Seneca Falls*, 1974.

in children. This can be done by exposing them to right kind of books at the right time.

The educationists need to come forward and see that the curriculum is planned in such a way that every Indian child becomes aware of the fact that the hands that rock the cradle can also rule the world. Women are not inferior beings and they do not need separate treatment. It is essential to generate a spirit of co-operation on the basis of parity of status amongst boys and girls. To quote Lucretia Mott :

“The question is often asked : What does a woman want, more than she enjoys ? What is she seeking to obtain ? Of what rights she is deprived ? What privileges are withheld from her ? I answer, she asks nothing as favour, but as right; she wants to be acknowledged a moral, responsible being.”¹⁵

¹⁵Lucretia Mott, discourse. circa 1849, *History of Woman Suffrage* 1, 1881.

the mother and lived with her in the same family. The Nayar women, being self-reliant and free, had a respectable position in society.

The Rigvedic Aryan Society of about 3000 BC was patriarchal. Yet, since the Rigvedic Aryans were always in need of increasing their numerical strength, they gave their woman an eminent status in society. Women were their copartners in all phases of life. Generally parents and guardians arranged their marriages. But the *Rig Veda* refers to some contract marriage also. *Swayambar* was the privilege of the Kshatriya girls only. Monogamy was the general rule, but some chiefs and sages were polygamous.¹ There is no indication of infant-marriage in the *Rig Veda*. A widow was married to the brother of her deceased husband.²

Professional dancers and courtesans were not prevented from elevating their status in society. The *Rig Veda* mentions the marriage of king Pururavas with Urvasi, a dancer. There are several other instances of this kind.

In the *Rig Vedic* times women were greatly respected in the family. The woman was the home.

‘जायदेस्तम’, ‘गृहिणी गृहमुच्यते’ ।

Wife and husband jointly performed religious ceremonies and offered prayers to the deities. Women were free to participate in intellectual discourses and were not subjected to any religious disability. Women had the right to compose religious hymns; in fact, Visvavara, composed some of the hymns of the *Rig Veda*.

The later Vedic period witnessed a decline of the status of women in society primarily because of the development of a belief, evolved in the *Atharva Veda*, in the existence of hell and

¹*Rig Veda* : 10/102/11 ; 1/116/10 ; 8/19/36

²*Ibid.* XVIII. 8

The Status of Women in Indian Society

Dr. Rajendra Singh Vatsa.

Of the literature of the Indus Valley Civilisation there are no remains; the inscriptions on seals are still not deciphered. But from the abundance of numerous figures of the richly ornamented goddesses and the discovery of the bronze of a dancing girl from Mohanjodaro, and the relatively lesser figures of males, it can be inferred that women enjoyed an honourable status in that society.

The ancient Tamil literary works like *Tolkappiyam* refers to the prevalence of ‘Kalavu’ a secret form of marriage among the Tamilians in the South. This was pure and simple love marriage between a young man and a girl with no ceremonies or customs. Women lived in freedom. *Sati*, infant marriage, *purdah*, and other such social evils did not plague them.

In the primarily matriarchal society in Kerala a Nayar girl was married through a simple ceremony, known as *sambandham*. The bridegroom offered *Pudava*, a set of clothes to the bride. Even after marriage the girl did not leave her house; her husband lived in his own and visited his wife only at night for conjugal rights. Children belonged to

heaven. survival of soul after death, and the possibility of its redemption through a son and a son alone. Besides, on account of an ever-increasing importance of Brahmanical notions of ceremonial purity, women began to be considered generally impure, more so during their child-birth.

The *Atharva Veda* deprecates the birth of daughters. And in the *Brahmanas* there are references to female infanticide. The brahmanas also enjoin that a disobedient wife ought to be taught obedience by physical force. According to Shakuntala Rao Sastri in *Women in the Vedic Age*, the *Maitrayani Samhita* places woman on par with dice and drink, and describes her as one of the major evils in society. She is declared to be untruth itself in human society, and is connected with Niroriti, the genius of darkness. The *Taitareya Samhita* and *Satpatha Brahmana* rank her as inferior to (even) a bad man.

In spite of the above unfavourable views about women in the later Vedic literature it must be stressed that there were some authorities who disagreed with them. Some *Brahmanas* considered women competent to perform sacrifices and read the Vedas. According to the *Taitreya Brahman*, a man without his wife was debarred from performing any religious ceremony.

अयज्ञोवाहयेष योऽपत्नीक; T B2/2/2/6

In many local areas the above mentioned anti-women injunctions were not favoured.

From about 2000 BC to 1000 BC the Upanishads, with their predominantly national and intellectual view of life, did not agree with the injunctions of the *Brahmanas*. They gave women a much better status. Women were given sound education. They could study the Vedas. Even sudra women like Janasruti were permitted to study the Vedas. Maitreyi and Gargi were outstanding intellectuals and philosophers of the Upanishadic period. There were lady professors in the

Gurukulas along with men. Husband and wife were enjoined to perform social and religious rites together. They maintained high moral standards.

During the main *Sutra* period from about the sixth century BC to the third century BC, there were several writers of the *Grihya Sutras*. Of them, Asvalayana, Apastambha, Sankharyana and Bharadwas were outstanding. Although they lived and worked at different times and places, they held similar views about certain fundamental aspects of the status of women in society.

The injunctions of the *Grihya Sutras* adversely affected the position of women. Asvalayana prohibited the performance of rituals by married women. A woman was debarred from inheriting wealth and was denied the right to the property of her husband. Thus, the *Grihya Sutras* deprived women of numerous rights and freedom which they had enjoyed earlier. Their position in society was worse than what it had been during the later Vedic period.

Jainism considered women inferior to men. The Jain texts mostly written by monks were, in general, unfavourable to women. The following extract from the *Tandulaveliya* illustrates this point ;

“She is called Nari (Na·ari) because there was no worse enemy for man than she; she is Mahila because she charms by her viles and graces; she is called Padma because she accelerates a man’s passion: she is called Mahitiya because she creates dissention; she is *Kama* because she delights in coquetry; she is called Angana because she loves the Anga or body of man; she is Josia because by her tricks she keeps man under subjection; she is Vanita because she caters to the taste of man with her various blandishments”.³

³Jain, J.C. *Life in Ancient India as Depicted in the Jain Canons*, Cit in Thomas, P. op cit. pp 110-111

Take another illustration;

“.....Cruel in their hearts, and charming in body, speech and glance, girls resemble a knife inlaid with gold”.⁴

However, the actual status of woman in society was quite different from the one described in the Jain texts. The Jains in general considered women as desirable. They married and had children. Jainism rejected the sacramental view of marriage. There were women who were highly respected. Ajja Chandana was the first disciple of Lord Mahavira. Woman as mother was given the greatest esteem both by the general public and the monks. Trisala, mother of Mahavir, is deeply venerated by the Jains. Kings were proud of their women. For King Gandhachaya his beloved Malli was doing work of his whole kingdom. Many kings were polygamous. King Mahasena, had according to *Vivekasuya*, one thousand wives.⁵ The courtesans held a high position in society.⁶ The *Nayadhammakaha* refers to Champ as one of the most celebrated and privileged courtesans. Good women of even low status could move into higher levels of society. Charmed by her qualities and grace, king Jiyasattue of Khupaitthiya married Kanayamanjari, the daughter of a painter, and made her his chief queen.

The status of Buddhist women differed from their Hindu sisters. Buddha considered women as an obstacle in the attainment of Nirvana, and, therefore, did not favour their entry into the Buddhist order. Even after he allowed them entry on the persuasion of his disciple Ananda, he feared that this would adversely affect the future of Buddhism. But contrary to the Brahmanical Hindu view of women, Buddhism recognised the individuality and independence of women, and their right to Nirvana particularly in the case of the nuns. The Buddhist ladies, known as Theris or elderly ladies, had freedom to compose religious songs. Among some of the

⁴Ibid, p. 112

⁵Ibid, p. 114,

⁶Ibid, p. 113

distinguished theris drawn from the different castes, communities and professions. including prostitutes, were Sumedha, the daughter of the king of Kroncha, Ishidasi, the only daughter of a wealthy merchant of Ujjain, Utpalavarna, the daughter of a rich merchant of Savitti, Ardhakasi of Kasi, Padmavati of Ujjain, the favourite of king Bimbisara, and Ambapali of Vesali. *Their Gatha* (Songs of the Theris,) which is important part of the Buddhist Canon, contains songs written by seventy-three nuns. In these songs these women have expressed their joy on the freedom they had achieved. For instance, Sumangala in one of her songs wrote ;

“O woman : Well set free How free am I,
How thoroughly free from kitchen drudgery !
My brutal husband.....
Purged now of all my former lust and hate !
I dwell musing at ease beneath the shade. Of spreading
boughs—O, but it is well with me”.⁷

The Buddhist texts reveal that mother was respected more than father. Marriage in Buddhism was not a sacrament but a contract; only grown up girls were competent to marry. Widow marriage was permissible. Buddhist society was free from evils of Sati and infant marriage. In some cases daughters-in-law sought shelter in nunneries to save themselves from the tyranny of the mothers-in-law. Far from being objects of contempt, the courtesans were considered useful and desirable. They were free to upgrade their social status. Kings and nobles sought after them. Many of them were very wealthy and influential. In Vesali the Buddha accepted Ambapali's invitation to stay as her guest. The heroine of the *Kurudhamma Jataka*, a courtesan, was considered the highest authority on morals. She gave sermon to a group of learned Brahmins on Dharma or duty.⁸ Ashoka's daughter Sanghamitra was the first woman foreign missionary in the world, who went to Ceylon and founded the order of Buddhist nuns there.

⁷Thomas, P., op cit, p. 9-1

⁸Ibid, p. 97.

The *Artha Sastra* of Kautilya helps us in understanding the status of women in Mauryan India. It makes a departure from the position taken by the *Grihya Sustras* on the status of women. The age of consent was twelve for a girl and sixteen for a boy. There were early marriages but not infant marriages. Kautilya laid down that a girl, whose parents failed to marry her for three years after her first menses was free to marry a man of her own choice even outside her caste. A woman could own property in her own right, although a widow after her re-marriage was denied the right to inherit her first husband's property. Widow marriage was permitted in all castes. A woman was given the right to leave her husband 'if he is of bad character, is gone long abroad, or has become a traitor to his king, or is likely to endanger the life of his wife, or has fallen from his caste, or has lost his virility.' Polygamy was permissible but each time a man married a new woman he had to pay a certain amount of money to the superseded wife and some to the state. Negligence of marital duties by man was punishable with fines. Punishment for adultery was also in the shape of fine.

The above rules were not universally enforced in Mauryan period. Besides, according to the writings of the Greeks, including Megasthenese, women were excluded from the study of sacred texts. "The sons succeeded the father". The wealthy were polygamous. Child marriage was prevalent in some regions of South India outside the Mauryan empire. Swyamvara was practised among certain royal class. The Greeks have mentioned the existence of Sati also.

The post-Mauryan period in Indian history was one of the rapidly changing political and social scene. Many foreign invaders like Parthians, Greeks, and Seythians were being absorbed and assimilated in the social structure of the Indo-Aryan society in the Northern and Western parts of India. The *Mahabharata*, a literary creation of this period, gave sanction to many new social customs such as inter-racial and inter-caste marriages. For instance, Bhim married and

lived with the Rakshasa lady Hidimbi. Arjun married a Naga woman Ulupi and lived in her house for some time. Shantanu the father of Kuru-Pandavas married Matsya Gandhi or Satyavadi, a fisherwoman and the lunar line descended through her son Vichitravirya. Similarly, the Aryan king Yayati married Asura princess Sharmishta.

But the *Mahabharata* portrayed the nature of women as inherently base, and exhorted her to observe piety and obedience to man. It made marriage for her an obligatory sacrament without which her body was feared to remain impure. At the same time it prescribed that by marriage a woman became the property of her husband by law. From the childhood to the old age a 'woman is never free', was the observation of the *Mahabharata*.

Despite such observations a woman as mother held a high status during the age of the *Mahabharata*. At one point it was stressed that :

"A man's preceptor is greater than ten Acharyas, his father greater than ten preceptors and his mother greater than ten fathers".⁹

Emphasising the status of a wife, Shakuntala told Sushyanta :

"The wife is half the man, and the best of friends. She is as a father to her husband in the performance of religious rites, and as a mother in sickness and at times of distress. The wife is the constant companion of her husband.....in exile.....in adversity....."¹⁰

The ideal of Pativrityam was emphasised in the *Mahabharata*. By her virtue and devotion Savitri succeeded in getting back her husband from the jaws of death. The custom of sati was prevalent among certain royal families, but the *Mahabharata*

⁹Thomas, p. Ibid p. 154.

¹⁰Ibid, pp. 151-152.

neither tried to exalt it nor denounce it. Widow-marriage was condemned as sinful. Monogamy was the general rule, but the wealthy, the powerful and the learned sages could be and were polygamous.

From the *Ramayana* of Balmiki there emerges a picture of the status of women in society which differed from that of the *Mahabharata*. The practice of Pativrityam was being enforced and even a devoted woman like Sita found it impossible to live up to it. Infant-marriage had become popular. Women of the royal household had to observe purdah. It was unsafe for women wearing ornaments to move about in public gardens. Women lost much of their earlier freedom in society.

The Indo-Aryan and non-Aryan communities were patriarchal. Contrary to the former, marriage for the latter was not sacramental but a *secular affair* with freedom of divorce and remarriage.

During the Gupta period from the fifth to the sixth Century AD there took place a strong revival of Hinduism which gradually drove Buddhism out of India. At that time the Brahmins legislated for the country and the Kshatriyas executed the laws. An excessive stress was laid on an effort to elevate the soul at the expense of the body. A woman was thought to be an hindrance in that effort. Hence, her freedom was further restricted; she was denied the knowledge of the scriptures, and given a status subordinate to that of man.

But there were exceptions. The King Chandra Gupta (319 AD—335 AD) got his wife Kumar Devi's name inscribed on coins, thereby giving her a unique honour. In his well known *Brihad Samhita* the celebrated astronomer Varahamihira (who lived in the sixth century AD) pleaded for sex equality, in fact, for a superior status for women, in the following words (translation from Sanskrit):

“It is women who adorn jewels, not women who are adorned by jewels. In fact, women are the jewels; there

are no greater jewels created by God than the jewel that is woman, that is capable of giving delight to man by sight, by hearing, by speech, by thought and touch. With her, Dharma, Artha and Kama are possible; a son is also possible only through her. Hence, woman should be considered the mainstay of society, the home of the goddess of prosperity, and should be held in honour and respect. Women have been driven to wickedness by men; women are superior to men in virtue.....they are pure as gold. The households in which virtuous women are disrespected are accursed, are destroyed as if struck by the goddess of destruction. Man is born of woman; hence, O ungrateful ones who slander women, to whom you owe your very existence, how can you ever be happy? Conjugal fidelity is enjoined on both husband and wife, and its violation by either is censured equally by the *Shastras*, but men disregard this, while women do not; hence women are superior to men.....”

During the period from the seventh to the twelfth century several codes, *Puranas* and *Tantras* were produced. Manu and Yajnavalkya were the two most important compilers of the Hindu law of this period. The former legislated that from the childhood to the old age ‘a woman is never fit for independence’. She was to be kept constantly under male surveillance. The rights of women in practically all law books are identified with those of Sudras, slaves and children’. Manu further ordained that “.....Women destitute of strength and destitute of the knowledge of Vedic texts, are as impure as falsehood itself, that is the fixed rule”. A woman could not have wealth exclusively of her own. An Aryan was not to eat with his wife.

The later law-givers were even more cruel to women. For example, according to Daksha, a wife was always to be taught about her place. Majority of the law-givers wanted a woman to worship her husband as god, even if he were a drunkard, a gambler, or a debauch.

The law-givers also recommended infant-marriages. Manu did not consider post-puberty marriage as sinful. But several other law-givers felt otherwise. Yajnavalkya, Yama, Marichi, Parasara declared that "the father of a girl married after puberty goes to hell". The result of such injunctions was that girls were married in their infancy, and consummation of marriage was generally performed after puberty. But some later commentators recommended consummation of marriage even before puberty. Infant-marriages were sustained by the economic structure of the joint family. It is ironical that whereas literacy was thought to be an admirable asset of prostitute and, for a family girl illiteracy was sacred and literacy a sin. Perhaps this explains the female illiteracy which became widespread specially in the seventh century AD.

Widow marriage was prohibited for the Brahmin and Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. In certain regions of India a widow's head was shaved and she was advised to lead a strictly pious life. Sati, the practice of burning widows alive on the pyre of their dead husbands, was also being practised, though only by a minority of the upper castes. It was not observed by the sudras.

In many temples numerous women were forced to live as Devadasis or temple-dancers. Their lives were no better than that of the prostitutes. In 1026 AD the Somnath temple had 500 Devadasis.

The evils survived because the feudal rulers and the priests prompted them. The protests of the righteous against them were generally ignored.

Nevertheless it must be remembered that now and then even the harshest law-giver conferred on woman a status superior to that of man. Both Manu and Yajnavalkya have exhorted men to honour their woman and keep them contented and happy, lest misfortune should overtake the household through the sorrows of the neglected women.

The Tantric literature of the period was generally favourable to women. The *Mahanirvana Tantra* has enjoined that.... 'By riches, clothes, love, respect and sweet words should one's wife be pleased. It condemned Sati because in its view every woman is the image of the goddess'. It permitted widow marriage. Infanticide was prohibited.

The Lingayats of South India had similar disposition towards women. Their leader Basava held that men are not superior to women; the woman is to be treated with respect and kindness.

The advent of Islam brought about change in the status of women. Among the Muslims marriage was basically a civil contract between two adults—a man and a woman. Some of the Muslim women became famous rulers-like Razia Sultan in thirteenth century and Chandbibi in sixteenth century but the general condition of Muslim women was deplorable. There was widespread polygamy and purdah system. In their harems the kings and nobles kept hundreds of helpless women.

The socio-economic conditions of the period adversely affected the attitude of the contemporary writers towards women. Even the so-called Bhakta poets held utterly perverted notions. They described a woman as extremely impure and despicable (महा अशुद्ध, रोम रोम मलिन)¹¹ 'Dadu called her Rakshasi or devil, Kabir the gateway to hell.¹² In the words of Tulsidas a woman is the most wicked of all (अघम ते अघम, अघम अतिनारी)¹³ But in their better senses they write in her praise. They all glorified her as mother :

नारी निन्दा मति करै नारी नर की खान ।
नारी ते नर होत हैं, ध्रुव प्रह्लाद समान ॥

Sur Das had a natural and humane disposition towards woman. From his poems she emerges as an individual liber-

¹¹Sunder Darshan pp. 277-278

¹²Hindi Kavya Pravesh p. 187

¹³Ram Charit Manas 3/35/2

ated from traditional social barriers free to move about in and outside her home, loving and lovable, and yet devoted to her duties.

As a result of the centuries-old social prejudice the status of women reached the lowest ebb in India during the eighteenth century. However, several new forces that emerged in the course of time have slowly but steadily helped to upgrade her status. British social legislation, humanitarian endeavours of some of the British bureaucrats, Christian missionaries, and Indian social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Dayanand Saraswati, Mrs. Annie Besant, Ramabai Ranade, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati, D.K. Karve, B.M. Malabari and innumerable other luminaries wrote books, pamphlets, articles and petitions pleading the cause of female liberation from several inhuman customs such as infanticide, infant marriage, burning widows alive, enforced widowhood, illiteracy, purdah, etc.¹⁴ Pleading the cause of widow-marriage, Ishwar Chander Vidyasagar wrote :

“Countrymen : Unfortunately.....it is impossible for you to have compassion for your helpless widows..... you perhaps imagine that with the loss of their husbands your females lose their nature as human beings and are subject no longer to the influence of passion”.

Pandita Ramabai Saraswati, in her book *The High Caste Woman* (1901) gave a call to all those “who have any interest in or compassion for your fellow-creatures, let the cry of India’s daughters, feeble though it be, reach your ears and stir your hearts”.

As a result of such literary endeavours the above-mentioned cruelties against women were taken cognizance of by law. It is noteworthy that from the nineteenth century along with men women also began to work for the elevation of female status in society.

¹⁴Vatsa, Rajendra Singh : *The Growth of Humanitarianism in India 1860-1914* (Ph.D Thesis) Delhi University 1969.

The struggle for India’s independence opened up a new chapter in the emancipation of women. In Gandhiji they found a vehement advocate of sex equality. On his persuasion and under his leadership women came out of their domestic seclusion and participated in active politics. After Gandhiji’s arrest Mrs. Sarojini Naidu led the movement against the Imperial Salt Laws. In Salt Satyagraha of 1930, of over 80,000 participants 17,000 were women. Many of these women, like Smt. Durgabai, Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay, Vijay Lakshmi Pandit, Violet Alva, Sushila Nayyar played a leading role in the national struggle for freedom. Col. Lakshmi Sahgal organised a women’s corps under Subhas Chandra Bose.

An inevitable consequence of women’s role in the national struggle was an unprecedented rise in the status of women. For the first time in the world history Indian women got the right to seek election to provincial and national legislatures. Even during the British Raj a number of women came to hold ministerial portfolios. After independence, they have been granted complete political, economic, religious and social equality with men. They have been given the right to property. Our constitution guarantees them “equality of status and opportunity”. The speed with which the legal disabilities of women have been removed in India has no parallel in the world history. There is hardly a walk of life where women have not distinguished themselves.

There are, of course, impediments to a fuller implementation of the law and we come across instances of injustice to women here and there, but the movement for its enforcement cannot be reversed. Literature has helped to promote it and it will continue to do so. Rejecting the traditional social values prejudicial to women Nirala pleads for equality of men and woman :

दोनों हम भिन्न वर्ग, भिन्न जाति, भिन्न रूप, भिन्न धर्म भाव, पर केवल अपनाव से प्राणों से एक थे ।

And Sumitra Nandan Pant wrote :

योनि नहीं है नारी, वह भी मानवी प्रतिष्ठित
उसे पूर्ण स्वाधीन करो,
वह रहे न नर पर आश्रित
मुक्त करो नारी को ।”

Such exhortations have external appeal. They are bound to bring about revolutionary changes in the status of women : it is just a matter of time.

From a brief review of the status of women in Indian society from the Indus Valley civilisation to our times it is evident that the status of women has never been one set pattern across the country. It has differed from age to age, region to region, religion to religion, caste to caste, and, in fact, from house to house and individual to individual. Since the later Vedic period their status changed for the worse specially in the Indo-Aryan society. It deteriorated during the medieval period and became worst during the eighteenth century. What happened in the Indo-Aryan society did adversely affect, to some extent, even the non-Aryan society.

From the foregoing analysis we further learn that the response of the intellectuals, writers and educationists to the status of women also differed widely from one another at different periods of history. While some were unjust there were others who were humanely disposed towards them. It must be admitted that the number of the latter has been definitely smaller than that of the former. But it is the latter who advocated strongly for improving the status of women through out the course of Indian history. From the nineteenth century the number of such writers, reformers, and educationists has been increasing, their number have perceptibly swelled in our times. We can claim to be their humble but devoted disciples and in our hearts we cherish a sincere desire to see our women to be on equal footing with men so that the society s more harmonious and enjoyable.

PART II

THE SCOPE

Language and Women

P.N. Saha

The evolution of human society began with equal status to both sexes. The prehistoric men and women lived in caves without any inhibitions. They were just part of the nature and lived life with its gifts as well as hazards. Men and women laboured together for food, shelter and security. They hunted for food, shared domestic chores, fought individual feuds and tribal wars and faced natural calamities together.

In the process language in the form of the spoken word replaced gestures as a means of communication between the two sexes and between the different groups. Gradually, language developed in the written form and ultimately from essentiality to luxury. As luxury is almost always a source of laxity, it started giving way to sexism and linguistic discrimination against women. With the development of the modern patriarchal civilisation eclipsing the matriarchal system, man-dominated language flourished and the spoils of it—'weaker sex' or 'fair sex'—have an overtone of sex-bias against women. The traditional non-involvement, unconcern, indifference and tolerance of women towards men's effort to widen the horizons of language, contributed adversely to its present form. Gradually, language attained its own stature

above the civilisation and in order to [attain that stature the society became the subject, instead of the master of language. This is evident in the general attitude of the sexes, particularly women, who never protested against sex-bias in language. It is also in evidence that most women got flattered by the sex-bias in language. Even women's writings have this evidence as they reproduce men's similes and metaphors while describing the natural beauty of hills, rivers, etc., with that of the figure of a young woman as if men do not have any such thing that pleases women. Neelima Gandhi writes. "At some places the snow assumes the shapes of a bare tree with forelorn branches, at others it takes the shape of a bird, a rabbit or a woman with enticing curves."¹ A woman getting enticed by another woman is unnatural in the majority of cases. It is, therefore, nothing but seeing things through man's eyes and subconsciously through the conditioning of the mind over the ages. This could be called the traditional hesitancy and non-boldness on the part of women. Psychologically, it is very injurious to the cause of the status of women in society and it deprives language of healthy repartee, causing imbalance and inequality between the sexes, thereby affecting the status of women.

Language, while developing above the level of the basic requirements of communication, drew its resources from the cultural evolution through the various stages of mankind. It fed heavily and sumptuously through the inter-woven ever-lengthening roots deep into the very soil, climate, environment, social practices, traditions, customs, religion, philosophy, pride and prejudices, topped with the fancy manuring of men, linguists and literatures and bloomed as a rose plant. The rose captivates one and all alike, but the gardener plucks the rose and leaves the thorns because "the flowers are to be propagated, not the thorns which should be buried deep." The language can be compared with the rose-plant and it should be treated on the same principles of gardening. This

¹ Neelima Gandhi in *Spirit of the scene*, The Hindustan Times Magazine Section, August 14, 1983, p. 1.

should be developed further to bring about balance in presenting the pictures of boys and girls at par with one another. Writers, editors, publishers, teachers, and linguists could do wonders and add to the health of language in all books and journals, especially educational books.

Linguistically, the rule is to assume that all human beings are males unless proved otherwise. When we say, man is a social animal, it includes both men and women. This assumption is applied to all products of nature, organic or inorganic. This has to be corrected eliminating sex-bias from language as also the linguistic discrimination which influences the very attitude of society towards women. Truth is stranger than fiction but it is a fact that men and women together produced a language which somehow discriminates between them. Woman has now realised that she is being blatantly discriminated, humiliated and insulted through the heaps of words, phrases and other linguistic weapons directed against her.

This can be proved if we look into the world's leading dictionaries. They have some very insulting words and explanations. The Chamber's Dictionary describes the word 'womanish' as an abuse, whereas its counterpart 'manly' has a high attribute attached to it. In Webster's dictionary 'womanhood' means fickleness, folly, etc. Such discriminatory and abusive language against woman has probably emerged through the dark ages. The man-dominated language through the same period of human history has assimilated the whims and prejudices of men which probably are projected through the language due to their individual personality traits. The dictionaries compiled ages ago mostly by men only carried forward the same linguistic fallacies. Now the new age of enlightenment demands doing away with linguistic discrimination and as such gender-bias. A new approach is the need of the hour to bring about personal as well as social harmony in the society.

William Shakespeare, the stalwart of English literature, who is often quoted as an authority even in the world's lead-

ing dictionaries, has said, "frailty thy name is woman". This kind of man's attitude towards woman is like the behaviour of a frightened ring master in a circus who some how blurts out to a lion (woman) in captivity. He forgets that the captive lion's behaviour is not innate or natural. The true nature of a lion is to ignore, tolerate, and confront or attack when provoked. Once in captivity, the lion's instincts, senses, impulses, reflexes, urges, and the co-ordination of these five factors get blunt because of external and internal suppression and disuse of various faculties. When such a lion trots, dances or jumps in the circus ring to the commands (using language again), he knows that he is being idiotic. But perhaps he tells himself that he is being ordered by a master-idiot-the ring master—who is a victim of vanity. The lion in the circus forgets and forgives and prefers to submit by giving the same performance over and over again just to save the environment from being further polluted by the man's false projections and foul language. In addition to such physical captivity there is 'environmental captivity' as well that we find in the 'wild life sanctuary' or the 'lion sanctuary' where the horde of lions are made captives in a particular environment. Here the lions live comfortably, well looked after, well fed and even have entertainment in their own way. They relax in their home-theatre of the jungle and watch gleefully the fancy show which men and women provide at their doors. Once there was a linguist-couple in the show. The husband exclaimed: "I can hear the lions making some comments amongst themselves".

The wife retorted: "Perhaps they are saying, 'whatever may have happened to us, we still remain the kings as these weaklings, the human beings, come here every day and salute us!'"

Probably such attitudes and behaviour of men has made women almost helpless over the ages and so they serve, swing, dance, cohabit, and act to their commands. Men made women conscious of being weak, then called them frail, and prompted the philologues (those who are fond of words) to

enshrine it in literature, like Shakespeare, wherever they could do so.

The sociological resources of language extended the word 'mother' into 'mother-tongue', i.e., a language from which another language takes its origin but interestingly the language itself discriminates 'the mother' i.e., woman.

According to Chambers Dictionary a 'wife' is the mistress of the house, she is also a hostess (goodwife), and a 'housewife' is only a female domestic manager; According to Webster's Dictionary a 'sister' is a 'female fellow member', nun, and 'a hospital nurse'. There are many more such words, not worth mentioning here, which came into use after the social traditions and customs were initiated and followed by men.

Psychologically, such words or expressions in language that deny equal status to women, by discrimination and disapprobation are very depressing, denegrating and degrading to women. They have gone down lower in status to that of men. But men should be sporting. If they are prepared to shed off the obsolete rules of the status game they can make women equal partners in it.

Considering the fact that some countries of the world have already produced women as heads of states, prime ministers, administrators, business executives, technocrats etc., the cause of the equal status of women stands vindicated. Women have amply proved that they can be equal to men in all walks of life.

Linguistic revolution alone can save the language from gender-bias and discrimination and accord a proper place to women which is their right. All the educational books, whether general, rapid readers or text-books should not expose students or even others to fellacious language. Gradually the human minds will begin deconditioning and the use of derogatory words, phrases, and expressions against women will be seen through.

Men and women together created the language and they together can salvage it as far as the status of woman is concerned.

through the social surroundings and caressing the buds and when they are nourished in a congenial atmosphere of happy families. As such, language proves to be the most potent instrument which can help building up the desirable attitudes in children and ultimately changing the society. It can also be exploited for generating a healthy attitude towards women and raising their status in society as a whole.

Our language textbooks both at the primary and secondary level should be specially designed to highlight the stories of chivalry, sacrifice and patriotism shown by women since time immemorial. Illuminating illustrations from history and legendary tales like those of Maharani Laxmi Bai, Panna Bai the faithful nurse of the royal child, Florence Nightingale etc. must be specifically incorporated in the textbooks. References and quotations from great men, both in the past and the present, appreciative of women's significant role in, and contribution to the various fields of human activity must be conspicuously highlighted. Special mention of their achievements in different walks of life will help in developing a sense of appreciation for them in the innocent minds of children reading those textbooks. It will also develop in them sense of respect for women of the country, resulting in an overall healthy attitude towards them. It will make our children learn to look at woman as a part and parcel of the socio-economic set-up in which they live. The language textbooks will be better appreciated by the young children if they profusely illustrate the diverse roles of a woman as daughter, wife or mother and also the wider perspective of her role as a citizen of the country working for the development of the nation in her own way by contributing her share of work at home and outside by preparing her children to love the country and its soil.

This line of approach towards raising the status of women through language textbooks will not be very useful without making frequent mention of their rights and duties which have more often than not been undervalued. Episodes or

Status of Women in Language Teaching

Ashok Kumar Mathur

The need for raising the status of women arises from the fact that they have, for the most part, been indifferently treated and even looked down upon in the male-dominated society. The traditional values of their respectable position and much elevated status are fast deteriorating and consequently the mal-practices which degrade them from their worthy place are getting momentum day by day. We cannot but condemn outright the repeated incidents of dowry deaths, of which one of the meanest forms is the menace of bride-burning. We cannot keep our eyes shut for a very long time from this phenomenon of society.

Although different means for women's emancipation have been suggested from time to time, here we are mainly concerned with realising the value of equality amongst the boys and girls through textbooks, supplementary readers and other reading materials to which children are exposed. Language is the vehicle of thought. The seeds of emotional, moral and social values sown in the tender soil of children's minds through such reading materials tend to grow into beautiful flowers which bloom when they get the soft breeze filtering

references pertaining to the exploitation and suppression of woman's rights, in any walk of life, must invariably be scrapped and replaced by material conducive to the growth of healthy feeling towards them. Stories alluding to the equality of their political social, cultural and religious rights must be highlighted so as to help children develop a fair understanding of one another irrespective of their being boys or girls.

The book may also illustrate woman's participation in movements of social amelioration and her role in the emancipation of mankind as a whole. Anecdotes from the lives of great women like Sarojini Naidu, Mother Teresa, Smt. Indira Gandhi and others can go a long way in leaving a permanent impression on the minds of young children. Representation of female characters in plays, novels and short stories etc. must be significant not only qualitatively but also quantitatively. Anything that denegrates the position of women or amounts to segregation and discrimination must be carefully deleted from the book.

Some critics might be inclined to contend here that all this will amount to preferential treatment to women and as such create a state of confrontation between man and woman. But this contention holds no water in so far as we are not talking of giving any special status to women, but only one of equality with men. The forte of our argument is that woman is in no way inferior to man and that she can rub shoulders with him in any walk of life. There are women in politics, in defence and security forces, in administrative set ups, in teaching and nursing professions, in mechanical and engineering trades that is to say in all areas of activities where men can work. Such being the capabilities of women, why should there be an apathetic attitude towards them?

Why should one think that men alone can dominate the socio-economic scene of life and woman has but to live as his dependent? It is this kind of attitude which has to be corrected through language teaching in our schools. The

writers and teachers ultimately have the joint responsibility of bringing about the awareness amongst children that both boys and girls stand on the same plane and should get equal opportunities in life.

It is, therefore, the need of the time to scrutinise and reshape our language textbooks to promote better understanding in children. This will also go a long way in mitigating the present day stigma on the holy name of womanhood and prove to be an eye-opener for the so called social reformers of the day. Only a concerted effort like this will help in restoring to women their legitimate place in society. It will also bring about a new social order in which both men and women are treated as the two wheels of the same chariot, two sides of the same coin and complementary to each other.

Children at the school level need guidance and direction which can be provided to them through language textbooks or other reading materials that are intelligently and carefully designed. In doing so both the language and the content parts of the book must be taken care of. Sometimes a derogatory remark towards woman, howsoever inadvertently made, may spoil the show and create an altogether a fallacious impression in the minds of children. Language is a delicate tool to handle and special care is needed in using it correctly.

But a balance is required in planning and writing of the textual materials, because the aim is to bring about a feeling of togetherness and cooperation and not rivalry between man and woman. Apart from language, the theme and content is equally important. If some lessons portray a bright picture of boy's marvellous feats, other lessons must highlight the performance and achievements of girls. It is, therefore, of paramount importance that both language and content in textbooks are carefully scrutinised and presented in a manner which creates no misunderstanding.

A study of textbooks from the view point of status of women would remain incomplete without saying a few words on the part played by parents in moulding the minds of their children. Textbooks, we all know, soon become a valuable treasure of the children. They begin to love them so much that they are often inclined to imitate the characters depicted in these books. Their behaviour, both at home and outside, is affected by what they have gone through in these textbooks. Parents who fail to realise this potent influence of books on the minds of their children, often lose grip on them.

A word here and a word there from parents and teachers will go a long way in developing the right approach towards home being a place of solace and family being a heaven on earth where there is love, respect and harmony. It is here that the children can learn about joint responsibility, dignity of labour and sharing pain, grief, happiness and ecstasy together.

Status of Women Through The Language Curriculum

Jaya Venugopal

कार्येषु मंत्री, करणेषु दासी
धर्मेषु पत्नी, क्षमया धरित्री
स्नेहेषु माता, शयनेषु रम्भा
रागे सखि लक्ष्मण सा प्रिया मे

—बाल्मीकि रामायण

The above sloka tells us that woman has many roles to play. She is a servant at work, a minister in giving advices, an affectionate mother for children and a damsel for her husband. She acquires unique status right from her birth. The Puranas tell us that women were worshipped. The language used in all our holy books was excellent to characterise woman. Woman always occupied the first place while being referred to as "Radha Krishna" or "Seeta Ram". Even in modern times while addressing a gathering it is said "ladies and gentlemen". Thus women are given esteemed position. Indian women are fond of asserting that they did not have to fight for their emancipation and the right to vote in the way the women in the West had to. "Our men handed it to us on a platter" is a favourite saying. It is indeed rather surprising that in a country where the ideology of female submissiveness is so developed, women

got so many legal and political rights without struggling for them.

We do agree that women did not get their social status until the Women's Indian Association fought for a woman's right to vote in the year 1914. Cochin and Travancore were the first states to grant qualified voting rights to women and then, a year later Madras Presidency followed suit in 1925, by granting franchise for women and also the right of representation. Thereafter many of the leaders of the women's movement were elected to prominent political posts. In 1927 the All India Women's Conference succeeded in securing women's right to vote.

A woman is referred to as 'Shakti,' the embodiment of cosmic energy. Many of our women in past were illiterates no doubt, but they were cultured and refined. It was during mid-twenties, that a few women became aware that in the course of political struggles, other issues connected with women's welfare were being neglected-particularly education. This point was not given a serious thought until Independence. In mid-fifties the National Council for Women's Education stressed the need for giving education to girls and women.

This should be one of the points for consideration while revising the curriculum. When we think of curriculum, specially the language curriculum, a lot of problems crop up as ours is a multilingual country. So the Government of India devised the three language formula for all school going children. Now the point is how the status of women can be enhanced through the language curriculum. It needs to be considered whether this particular value, should be introduced through, L₁, L₂ or L₃. We can achieve our goal best if such topics are introduced through L₁, or L₂, because the third language is usually meant only for understanding and communication.

Before the curriculum is framed the authorities should consider that the idea of status of women has to be introduced in two ways; first by being conscious that equality means giving opportunities both to the boys and girls in all walks of life and secondly by developing literature to reflect the duties,

responsibilities, ideals, legal rights, capacities and capabilities of women. The girls and boys in our schools come from families with high, middle, or low income groups; and also from rural, urban, or suburban backgrounds. Sometimes they come from such cultural sub-groups in which educational achievement is invariably valued either with a dignity or with some suspicion that the girls might get 'spoilt' and Westernized if they are permitted to have education. The present problem is of bringing awareness in both the boys and girls about their status and contribution to society. It is for educational planners and administrators, who implement these plans, to include sufficient materials in the language curriculum with a view to emphasizing the need for sharing the responsibilities and duties equally.

The content of the language material should be organised in such a way that students may progress, towards an increasingly natural utilization and organization of their knowledge. The language material to emphasize the status of women should be prepared within the limitations of teaching L1 and L2 i.e.

- ✓ (a) the logical structure of the subject,
- ✓ (b) the difficulty level of material in the light of the student's intellectual maturity, and
- ✓ (c) the relation of this particular field to other fields.

The selection of content, has to be based on the learner's comprehension abilities as per the age group. Girls or boys distinguish themselves right from the beginning. When we observe the children of pre-primary stage it is significant that girls take to the softer games like kitchen-ware set to play with, and boys prefer games full of activities like playing with ball etc. This is the stage where we can introduce them to the concept of equality through the playway method. Children can be asked to share the games like bat and ball, to keep their own things clean and tidy, and mix together while there is some sort of get together. Some of our textbooks contain questions like :—"Who cooks food at home?"

"Who looks after the family?" etc. All of us know what answers would be. Instead we could modify and ask questions like: "How do our parents look after us?" where the answer would depict the responsibility of both the parents. Playmaterial like kitchen-set must be used by both the girls and boys.

Most crucial stage of education is the primary stage where actual concepts are formed. Here the functions of family members and social workers are stressed. Words like postman, policeman can be modified. Here the teacher can use her discretion and can say that post-woman and police-woman can also be used because now-a-days we find women in police and in postoffices also. The language textbooks must lay due emphasis on duties, responsibilities, ideals, and abilities of both the boys and girls. Most of our textbooks at the primary level are structure based. The language books have to cover all types of themes right from developing good habits in children to spacecraft. Therefore, the text-book writers should keep in mind that proper projection of values commensurate with status of women are dealt with and are woven in the texture of the subject matter.

Secondary stage is a transition period where boys and girls try to know more about themselves. The teachers teaching these classes have an important role to play. As Indian education is text-book oriented, it is the major responsibility of the textbook writer to take care of what they actually convey. It would be in the fitness of things that women writers are given equal place in the lessons selected for the textbooks. Usually the aims and ambitions in one's life take shape at this tender age, so the girls should get proper perspective of life and their role in it.

The lessons in the textbooks, in the supplementary readers or in the compositions should include women writers, social workers or reformers on one hand and novelists, dramatists, artists, etc. on the other to depict that women have also

contributed a great deal in these spheres. Girls are physically weak than the boys. Sometimes they are easily tempted and are emotional too. These characteristics must not hinder their progress nor others be allowed to exploit them on this score.

Audio-visual aids can also play an important role in language curriculum. The films, filmstrips, radio, T.V. etc. must depict equal status of women at home and outside. These can be referred to by the teachers in language classes. Conversations, plays, and skits etc. must project the image of women who are progressing at the same pace as men. Women have the right to learn, the right to think independently and the right to act accordingly. There are many untold stories about women which can be brought into lime-light, e.g. references to Mrs. A.V. Krishna Rao, the famous social worker who started Stree Seva Samaj and many more institutions which are doing wonders in Madras, or to Mrs. Margaret Cousins, the Irish Woman, who had started 'Women's Indian Association' in Madras in 1914. She has written "I was dedicated to service of India, service to that half of India, which means womanhood."

Women should try to carry this torch of dedicated social service and rise above the time where they may be regarded as weary, meagre, and nasty. The planner of language curriculum, the textbook writer and the language teacher can join hands in completing this stupendous task. Woman does not want to be ahead of or behind a man. She wants to walk along with him.

Status of Women in the Language Curriculum : An Administrative Outlook

M.M. Joshi

It is a verifiable fact that women and girls are discriminated against in the educational systems. It may not be apparently so in the Communist countries but in the rest of the societies both occidental and Oriental, this discrimination has always existed and still does. Milton had remarked : "He for God only, she for God in him". Manu the author of ancient Hindu law, maintained :

"She should do nothing independently even in her own house. In childhood subject to her father, in youth to her husband and when her husband is dead to her sons ; she should never enjoy independence."

Restrained by such cultural constraints women could not hope to attain the same height of status as men. This situation was ridiculous as 'there are no differences in the measured creative abilities of boys and girls'.¹ (Raina, 1982)

¹T.N. Raina : *Sex Differences in Creativity in India* ; Indian Educational Review, Vol, XVIII-3, July, 1982.

In recent years a movement to uphold the dignity of women and provide equal opportunities to them has been started. In 1965, the United Nations embarked upon a programme to improve the status of women. In 1967, it passed the following Resolutions :

"All appropriate measures shall be taken to ensure to girls and women, married or unmarried, equal rights with men in education at all levels, and in particular :—

- ✓ (a) equal conditions of access to and study in educational institutions of all types, including universities and vocational, technical and professional schools ;
- ✓ (b) the same choice of curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard, and school premises and equipment of the same quality, whether the institutions are co-education or not ;
- ✓ (c) equal opportunities to benefit from scholarship and other study grants ;
- ✓ (d) equal opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult literacy programmes, and
- (e) access to educational information to help in ensuring the health and well-being of families".*

The year 1975 was designated as International Year of Women and UNESCO declared its belief that in the long run, education will prove to be the most effective channel for achieving equality between men and women and ensuring the full participation of women in development. The same year Dr. Kurt Waldheim, Secretary General of the United Nations, remarked :

"We must think positively about how the position of women in their own societies and in international affairs

*(Resolution No. 2263 adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, November 7, 1967, under Article 9, the 'Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women'.)

could not only be improved, but their large potential contribution be better utilized for the benefit of all."

The Indian Education Commission (1964-66) also emphasized that :

"the education of girls should receive emphasis, not only on grounds of social justice, but also because it accelerates social transformation".

The Commission went on to add that :

"the significance of the education of girls cannot be overemphasized. For full development of our human resources, the improvement of homes, and for moulding the character of children during the most impressionable years of infancy, the education of women is of even greater importance than that of men in the modern world, the role of women goes much beyond the home and the bringing up of children. She is now adopting career of her own and sharing equally with man the responsibility for the development of society in all its aspects. This is the direction in which we shall have to move".

It is now realised that girls and women have an important and distinctive contribution to make to the society of the future and that this will receive special consideration. We find that the teenage girls today have a zest for living. The task of education is not to contain this zest but to provide strength, reliability and sense of direction to it. There should be a balance in education which can be obtained from a proper combination of the arts, the science and the artistic and practical skills. Language is a natural activity. It is not only the means of communication but also the key to intellectual growth and as such is the key to all education. It is in this area that a lot of 'sexism exists.' There is a hidden curriculum, there is an invisible method by which women are discriminated against. Often such sentences as 'Big boys don't cry', and 'Little girls must not be bossy' are used by teachers. Instead of such examples the roles may sometimes be reversed.

There is no reason why 'weak' characteristics should be attributed to girls only. The Plowden Committee in England cited the case of a rural primary school Headmistress who wrote :

'The boys dug a hole and made a very satisfactory pond...a girl brought a jar of water from the football field to show me that it was not fit to drink, although it was always used for the players' tea. The boys wanted to find out if the rain water running down the bank contained any debris.....'

Instead of these discriminating roles she could have used the word 'children' or 'students' and not relegate girls to subsidiary roles where they were not even expected to ask questions to show curiosity about the rain water.

The reading schemes currently used in schools show the most traditional male/female domestic roles. This must change. The reading schemes and books for young children must depict women also as central characters. They should not always be portrayed as playing passive roles, as princesses or 'damsels in distress', and being helped or 'rescued' by 'prince charming'. They must emphasize female endeavour, must show pictures of working wives and mothers, the husbands who shop in the market, the wives who drive cars, women who put up shelves and put plugs on electrical appliance, male nurses and female doctors, women digging gardens, and men cooking lunch on Sunday. The language books must stop showing unadventurous, timid, lifeless girls and decisive, courageous, strong and imaginative boys, as illustrative models in real life. Examples of inter-changeable roles are beautifully given in the book *Breakthrough to Literacy* by Mackay, Thompson and Schnaub (1970). Though the stories in language books are not real, they have far-reaching impact as the school readers take them to be real. The readers do not just teach reading but mould the attitudes of the students.

To go deep into this aspect the Government of India set up a Committee on Differentiation of Curricula between boys and girls under the Chairmanship of Mrs. Hansa Mehta, which recommended :

“In the democratic and socialistic pattern of society which we visualise, education will be related to individual capacities, aptitudes and interests which are not strictly related to sex. There would, therefore, be no need in such a society to differentiate curricula on the basis of sex”.

In spite of such efforts the situation, more or less, remains the same. Not only women are normally mentioned as ‘weaker sex’ in the textbooks but most of the reading material revolves round the male characters. A random study of some textbooks reveals this glaring defect :

Textbook	Subject/ Class	No. of Chapters	No. of Chapters featuring girls/ women
1. “English Reader” II (Special Series) NCERT	Eng. VIII	20	Nil
2. “Bal Bharati”-I NCERT	Hindi-VI	32	3
3. “Bal Bharati”-V NCERT	Hindi-V	24	2
4. “English Reader”-I NCERT	Eng.-XI	12	2
5. -do- -II	-do- XII	13	Nil
6. “Supplementary Reader” NCERT	-do- XI	29	5
7. “Gulmohar Graded English Course” (Orient Longman)	-do- V	18	3
8. “Enrich you English” CBSE.	-do- IX	10	2

The examples clearly show the male bias with which the textbooks for children—both girls and boys—are written. This must change. Emphasis must be laid on having a proper balance on female and male characterization.

The language teachers must play a major role in providing equal opportunities to both girls and boys in the actual classroom situation. The teacher’s conversation should not revolve round the boys only but should encompass girls also. The girls should also be involved in participating in various ‘manly’ jobs. To the teacher the students should be just students and not boys and girls. That would be the ideal situation.

The role of the Principal in promoting healthy attitudes in children—both girls and boys—and in developing respect for each other’s work and the idea of co-operation amongst them is very important. The factors of prejudice, role-conditioning, sex-role, stereotyping, assumptions from leadership of the past should not cloud her/his administrative judgement.

Given below are many aspects of the school which incorporate some element of sexism, and which a Principal can avoid with timely guidance at appropriate juncture:—

I. Aspect directly connected with teaching Languages and Women’s Status :

- (i) Language textbooks and supplementary readers adopted—other than those compulsorily prescribed by the Board of Education—should be thoroughly scrutinized and those containing themes/structures of sex-bias should be revised, to delete and/or modify all such references.
- (ii) The work of language teachers should be supplemented with programmes of elocution, debates, dramatics etc. Through these activities the characterization of girls’ roles should be depicted as on par with that of the boys. The topics of debates and the themes of dramas should be chosen so as to portray equality of sexes. These programmes could be organised both at the individual level as well as interhouse basis.

- (iii) Teachers in general, and language teachers in particular, should be cautioned to treat both boys and girls without prejudice to either in and outside the classrooms.
- (iv) Films depicting the dignity of woman and her equal status with man should be screened. They could be part of composition work in language.
- (v) Seminars/Symposia/motivation camps for Language teachers may be organised to orient and re-orient them about the need to eliminate sex-bias from their teaching.

II. Aspects having indirect bearing on Language teaching and Women's Status :—

- (i) It should be ensured that the curriculum offers all pupils a full and realistic choice of the whole range of options. Boys may be allowed to offer subjects like Home Science, Knitting and embroidery, tailoring, child-care, and girls may offer electricals, woodwork, clay-modelling, metalwork etc.
- (ii) School playgrounds should not be segregated into areas for girls and areas for boys.
- (iii) Girls should not necessarily be asked to wear restrictive uniform like skirts or 'Saris', whilst only boys are allowed to wear trousers.
- (iv) Both in academics and sports girls may be urged to compete against boys and vice versa. They should not only be allowed but also encouraged to participate in all those games and sports which have traditionally been the preserve of boys. Innovations in Language teaching to develop the idea of equality of sexes should be encouraged. Improvised situations could be created in the class room.

- (v) Girls may not line up in separate row during school assembly.
- (vi) Boys' names must not be written first in class registers followed by girls' names.
- (vii) The houses in the school may be named both after renowned men and women.
- (viii) Guidance and counselling should be provided to students, teachers and parents so that in all walks of life conformity of attitude may be developed. If this is not done, the aim of propagating equality of sexes will be frustrated. Moreover what the language textbook envisages may be spoiled by the unimaginative and sexbiased programmes on T.V. Hence the need to educate people in all walks of life, and there can be no better way than to put the idea across to the parents.

Moreover, often Principals have been seen admonishing the girls for not behaving in a manner 'befitting' girls. This discrimination must go and measures at all levels taken for re-orienting the teachers for weaning them away from 'male-bias', and to re-frame the language curriculum, particularly at the school level, as the most impressionable years of children are spent in the school.

Role of an Administrator in affecting the Status of Women through School Curriculum

Renu Kaul

To an on looker "the school curriculum" and "administrator" signify two different poles, because the general feeling is that administrators have nothing to do with curriculum. Curriculum is the domain of the teacher. Whether the Principals of schools are pure administrators or whether they are teachers first and then administrators, is a debatable issue. The U.G.C. includes the Principal in the category of teacher, but considering the specific jobs that the Principals are assigned, it won't be out of place to call them administrators.

In the rank and file of all educational administrators, the Principal thus comes first, then the District Inspector and then the hierarchy of all those who look after the rest of the official duties. With this assumption, the next issue is what part does the Principal play in framing the curriculum. In India, it is most unfortunate that curriculum is fixed up round the table in some office by the people, who may have had the experience of teaching long back. It would be a happy situation if the Principals or teachers are also assigned such tasks

or at least are involved in this important venture or curriculum development. But by and large curriculum is framed by a heterogeneous committee which consists of officers, members of some board or association and also teachers from universities and colleges who can hardly claim to know a child's mind. Even if they know it, it is almost a story of the past for them because they are now busy with teaching at higher levels. This would reveal that so far as subject curricula are concerned, the first administrator—the Principal has no say, but the task of implementation is thrust upon them.

Principals are not expected to be merely subject specialists, they are supposed to know every subject and are expected to be able to give general guidance to each teacher. When the issue of "Status of Women in Language Curriculum" is discussed, it does not limit language in the classroom only. Of course much has already been said about restructuring our language books in such a manner that no prejudicial view point is reflected in the textbooks. But textbooks are not the only teaching aids. The teacher's conversation with children, in and outside the classroom has its own effect on them. There should not be any reflection of his cultural bias against women even when he converses with students in lighter moods. Young Children catch things indirectly. Whatever the teacher says or does has an ever-lasting effect in their sub-conscious minds. The question that is to be answered is how far Principals can have a check and control over such situation. Principals' attitude, his faith and belief can always be filtered through and have deep influence on the child.

To elevate women's position in society and to raise their status, a cultural metamorphosis is needed. It cannot be done either through language lesson, or history lesson, or in the school or in the play ground alone. Any one factor in isolation with the rest will never solve this issue.

"Strike the iron when it is hot". The conceptual framework of the child's mind is shaped from the very beginning

—through education. It is only lack of education that has been responsible for the narrow notion about women's inferior position in life. In educated families where women are at par with men, where they are able to partake the joys and sorrows of their men counter-parts with equal responsibility and efficiency, the picture is not so dismal, but the percentage of such families is extremely low. Teachers with different family backgrounds, with different psychological traits are in charge of small children. How can the Principals be responsible for all that they say to the children in and outside the classroom? Yet, there are some ways to do so. They can tone-up the college by holding staff meetings, addressing girls and boys in assemblies, and by arranging 'parent-teachers' meets and thus bring home the idea that the women's role in Indian society needs reconsideration and children also need to be aware of this factor. A women's place is no longer restricted in the four walls of home. It has already occupied other areas outside the home.

Home is perhaps an equally important factor in bringing about a healthier outlook towards women in general. Men saying: "women are not fit to be independent" are not still unheard of. How can one expect that the Principals with such family backgrounds will be able to influence their pupils in moving ahead with the time. A revolution to such attitude has to be brought in. This can begin in the classroom, in the school, at home and elsewhere. Personal contact with students—questioning, discussing and explaining facts of life can have a direct bearing on them. Good Principals are worshipped by students as ideals. They can work wonders with young children.

The high ups in the administrative ladder are still less concerned with children or their home-backgrounds. The position is still worse when the issue is limited to language curriculum. Sometimes strangely enough, the school inspector happens to be anything but a teacher. He looks down upon a teacher. There is a general feeling that a teacher can never

be a good administrator. Inspectors have hardly been seen bothering about curriculum. It is supposed to be outside their domain. Yet they too can get themselves involved in this task by organising refresher courses for language teachers now and then. They can call Principal's meet to discuss such vital issues. At the time of supervision they can see to it that the inputs given to the teachers are properly utilized, and the resources made available to them are not mishandled.

There is a limited scope for the inspectors. Now the contribution of the higher officers can also be assessed. Language teaching may be just one tool through which the awareness of children towards the status of women may be created but there are other agencies which are more powerful than the textbooks. It is here that the administrative officers can play some important role. Whatever efforts are made to highlight sex parity through the textbooks and language lessons, might be adversely affected by other more powerful mass media. Radio and televisions these days have more abiding effect than textbooks. The makers of education policy may take the matter with radio and television authorities and see that their efforts synchronise with that of the other departments.

Another area where the administrator, if not directly related to language teaching, can play some constructive role in elevating the status of women, is in deciding the policy of opening more co-educational institutions. In Uttar Pradesh, it has been accepted in theory by the Social Service Investment Board on Education which comprises of Secretaries and high officials of different departments, that separate women's colleges for higher education should not be opened. But in practice, due to social and political pressures, many girls' institutions are still in existence and many more are coming up every year. Even at the Secondary and Senior Secondary stages, co-educational institutions can be counted on fingers. So long as this segregation of sex exists in our educational institutions, understanding and appreciating each other's status may be a wishful thinking. Textbooks alone will not be able to do much.

Similarly in deciding the entire curriculum some positive efforts have to be made to provide equal opportunity to both the sexes for learning a particular subject. In Uttar Pradesh again no girl is known to have offered military science and no boy has yet studied home science at the Secondary Stage. Reservations of subjects on sex basis is a great hinderence in achieving the goal of equality of sexes.

Inter-school exhibitions on Science are organised at state and inter-state levels every year. But generally only the boys are seen participating in such exhibitions. Again, it is here that the administrator can play some definite role. To encourage girls' participation in such activities, there is no harm if special prizes are announced for them. This is just a process of bridging the gap that still exists in some parts of our country.

Perhaps no other device is more effective in bringing about any attitudinal change than educational tours. It is for the administrators to provide for such educational tours in which both boys and girls are allowed to participate. It is only when girls and boys come closer that they can understand each other better and develop a healthy sex attitude. Segregation has always been the root cause of all evils. Giving more opportunities of free mixing, allowing common situations in the school which the girls or boys can share with each other their will create a healthier atmosphere.

PART III

THE FORMAT

The Status of Women in the Teaching of English at the Upper Primary Stage

Ashok Mathur

Education has rightly been considered the greatest instrument that can bring about a change in any sphere of human life—social, economic, political, cultural, and the like. Society is always in a state of flux and powerful forces which try to take it in different directions are constantly at work. Old and traditional values, good or bad, are under pressure and new ones, desirable or otherwise, are being shaped. Real education provides us with tools which help us in lifting the useful from the worthless. Not only does it prepare us to adjust ourselves in the present set-up but it also helps us in developing values which may not exist at present but are desirable. So complex is this process of change that a variety of factors are involved in it. In this paper we are concerned with the role of schools as part of society and teaching of English in particular in bringing about a change in attitude towards the right status of women.

Let us first discuss briefly the factors responsible for the prevailing uncongenial climate. Due to the bias of society

towards the role of women, there is discrimination on sex basis. Such discrimination is discernible in textbooks and supplementary readers in their thematic and linguistic content and in its presentation. In the themes relating to women in the books there may be imbalance and the number of female characters may also be much less than that of male ones. Thematic content finds expression through the linguistic content. The use of different registers (i.e., different sets of grammatical and vocabulary items) and levels (for different occasions and persons) helps in communicating the writer's attitude towards others. So we have to keep out any language content which tarnishes the image of women. A particular way of presenting the thematic content through the linguistic content helps in communicating the total meaning. The image of a person is projected rightly or otherwise by the way it is portrayed. It is to be seen that the female characters have been portrayed in unbiased manner. The role of women in social, economic, cultural, historical, or religious fields has not been properly understood and appreciated by the parents, members of the family, in-laws and society in general and this has resulted in a negative attitude towards them. Social evils like dowry system, bride price, prostitution are a curse for the society and reveal men's highly prejudicial attitude towards women. Men's double set of standards is clearly revealed in the way they treat a widow and a widower or a spinster and a bachelor. Similarly the treatment metted out to a childless woman is highly discriminatory. For bringing about the desirable attitudinal change mere fighting against discrimination is not enough. Women's inherent qualities and their contribution to the various fields of life, too, are to be highlighted.

Development of new attitudes, or a drastic change in them is no easy task, for it is a long, gradual and trying process which requires that the whole atmosphere of the school should be such as to promote healthy attitudes. It is the teachers of all the subjects taught in a school, who have to make a team effort in this direction, though their roles would

differ in kind and degree. For example, language can play a more vital role as compared to other subjects. Not only that, formation and development of attitudes can take place more easily through a child's mother-tongue rather than with the help of a second language like English for two obvious reasons. First, the child is exposed to his mother-tongue all the time, everywhere—in the classroom, on the play ground in the streets, and at home. Secondly, his command of the mother-tongue increases with his mental age whereas in the case of the second language his mental age is high but his linguistic competence is much less than that of the mother-tongue. In other words, he does not learn much in the second language even in class VIII since it may only be his third year of English.

Before we try to bring about any attitudinal change in the students, it is essential that teachers themselves, the agents of such change, should be converted to the desired way of thinking. They have to be fully exposed to the new ideas. This can be done through group discussions, paper reading programmes, projects and providing them with literature on relevant themes.

Since the textbook is the most widely used teaching aid in our country, it is perhaps the mightiest weapon in the hands of a teacher to fight against injustice to women. More things can be wrought through a well-written book from the viewpoint of the right status of women than we can think of. A teacher's task becomes easy and smooth if he has a good textbook, which in no way denigrates women, excludes all negative attitudes and highlights positive ones.

A textbook writer, thus, has a vital role to play for he can help in promoting a healthy attitude of co-operation between boys and girls. First of all a stage-wise blue-print which shows the objectives, themes and values commensurate with the right status of women in society has to be prepared. We will also have to spell out which objectives, what themes and values, we propose to take up at a particular stage and class.

In the Elementary Teacher's Handbook (Status of Women Through Curriculum published by the NCERT) the only major idea to be introduced at the Middle School Stage is that home management is a joint responsibility of both the sexes. Though at this stage, the textbook writer has only a limited number of structural and lexical items which he can use, there are many other ideas he can take up even for middle school classes. Short biographies of women who have distinguished themselves in fields like different sciences, engineering, teaching, sports, politics, statesmanship, diplomacy, novel-writing, poetry, administration, social reforms etc., can be included. In addition to this, freedom-fighters and revolutionaries like Durgawati, Laxmi Bai, Chand Bibi; makers of history like Razia Begum, Jahanara, Roshanara; discoverers like Madam Curie; stateswomen like Aruna Asaf Ali, Sarojini Naidu, Vijai Laxmi Pandit and Indira Gandhi; personalities from 'puranas' like Shakuntala, Devki, Yashodhara, Uttara, Ahilya; musicians like M.S. Subuluxmi; social workers like Mother Teresa, Kasturba and D.K. Karve; saints like Mira; male social reformers like Dayanand Saraswati, Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshav Chand Sen, who tried to improve the lot of women, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Bankim Chandra and Sarat Chandra who have depicted women in the right way should also find a place in our books. The sacrifice of personalities like Panna, Rani Hada of Rajasthan needs to be highlighted. So also the ones who have left their mark on the international scene like Florence Nightingale and Joan of Arc. We can also have lessons on women workers in offices, farms and factories and also those in panchayats, state assemblies or Lok Sabha. The hard work and perseverance, bravery and creativity of rural and tribal women can be written about. In some lessons the idea that there has always been a woman behind the success of each great man can be presented. That genetically or ability-wise a woman is in no way inferior to a man is an idea which can be put forth through another lesson. Women's share in the process of decision-making and right to vote independently may be the theme of yet another lesson. Women Nobel

Prize winners may also find a place in the book. Space permitting, suffrage movement and activities of organizations like ATWC, YWCA, University Graduate Women's Association may also be included. Let us also remember to include literary works of women in the textbooks.

A textbook writer has to be extremely cautious that no statement or remark which denigrates women is allowed to creep in it, negative attitudes which militate against the right status of women do not find a place there, and materials which reveal the good qualities of women are included. For this purpose stories, plays etc., which run down social evils and highlight equality between sexes are to be presented to the students. Exercises at the end of each lesson, if properly framed, can go a long way in stimulating the right response from pupils and thus gradually bringing about the desired attitudinal change. Illustrations, too, can help a lot focussing the attention of the reader on the right status of women.

Supplementary readers can also play a vital role in developing among the students a healthy attitude towards the role of women in society. The writer of such a reader has a greater freedom as he is not tied down to the teaching of some structural or vocabulary items in each lesson as is the writer of a textbook. He can use a much larger variety of language material in each lesson. His task by its very nature is to dish up extremely interesting reading material. So whatever spills over from the textbook can easily be taken care of by him. It will be a good idea if we can get prepared some supplementary readers from the point of view of the right status of women, based on the various themes already suggested for use by textbook writers. Of course, here, too, illustrations and exercises can be used to the advantage of highlighting the desired values. If we indicate the portions of textbooks which can be exploited to bring into focus the right status of women, teacher's guides too, can be helpful in achieving the objectives.

Textbooks, supplementary readers and teachers guides are important tools for achieving the objective of elevating the

image of women, still their role remains limited as they can be used in the classroom only. For a deeper and wider impact on the young minds curricular activities can easily be utilized.

Literary activities provide a good opportunity to bring to light the great contribution of women in many fields. By an intelligent selection of topics for debates, discussions and other programmes the image of women can be elevated. Writing and reading out stories, essays, etc. on this theme can also help in achieving the objective. In poets' meet, poems, including those by women, can be recited by boys and girls. Special issues of school magazines, printed or hand-written, on the role of women in society, can be brought out. Girls are to be encouraged to write for the magazine and to read some published specially for women. Cultural activities like dramatics can also play a vital role and take shyness and fear out of the young girls.

In co-educational institutions girls and lady teachers can be encouraged to participate more actively in the school assembly. Boys and girls should sit and stand in mixed groups and not separately. Women guests including writers, artists, musicians, social workers and specialists in other fields can be invited to deliver talks. Boys and girls may be asked to narrate incidents from the lives of great women which glorify women. Quotations and 'thought for the day' especially those written by women may be selected so as to highlight the qualities of women.

Schools have different kinds of competitions. Houses can be named after great women and each can have boys and girls as members for inter-house competitions and other activities. Houses can be decorated with pictures and portraits of great women. Exhibitions of pictures and portraits with a brief write-up on great women and the status of women in different periods of history may be arranged. For different kinds of celebrations, including anniversaries of great women, work should be equally divided among boys

and girls in such a way that they get the impression that all types of jobs can and should be done by both the sexes. During picnics, excursions and tours boys should be asked to take up tasks which are traditionally assigned to girls, namely, cooking, serving food, cleaning utensils. School union provides a good opportunity as girls class representatives get a chance to air their views freely, vote according to their wishes and hold key posts. Some other activities like Parent Teachers's Associations are good forums for holding discussions on the right status of women. Yet another activity which helps in developing right attitudes towards women is assigning projects to undertake a study of the position of women indifferent societies at different times, e.g. collection of stamps issued in honour of great women, collecting names of women working in panchayats, municipal councils, state assemblies, parliament, judiciary and holding other key posts in and outside the country etc.

To sum up, it can be said that to restore the right status of women we have to fight against the highly discriminatory attitudes existing in society. The desirable attitudinal change can be brought about through a concerted team effort by the writer of books for schools and teachers who can help in creating a congenial atmosphere in and outside the classroom so as to elevate and enhance the status of women.

Establishing Equal Status of Women Through the Teaching of English at the Upper Primary Stage

Mira V. Dave

Men and Women are equally important and essential biologically, socially, and culturally, but in our man-centred society women are always given a secondary place. This could be the situation all over the world. Isn't it surprising that in a so-called advanced country like England women were not given the right to vote until they put up a long fight? In our country some of our scriptures did emphasise the importance of women at home and in society, but with the passage of time the status of women has deteriorated. Women have to suffer not only emotionally or mentally but also physically. They suffer only because they are women.

Mahatma Gandhi once said :

"If I was born a woman I would rise in rebellion against pretention on the part of man that a woman is born to be his plaything." (*The Thought of Mahatma*).

Such a situation is shameful on the part of a civilized society. It is nothing but cultural backwardness.

Of course our constitution gives equal status to all the of the country, and women do enjoy more freedom and equality in the present-day society. They have started getting opportunities in various fields. Women's education is also becoming widely acceptable. Thus the status of women has certainly improved a little after Independence but the percentage of such benefitted women is too small. Even today uncountable women become victims of social evils. Women are considered inferior to men not only physically but also intellectually. In families and also in society men dominate women. As a result, a great number of women are uneducated. Their subordinate position does not let their personalities develop fully. Even learned women, in many cases, suppress their ambitions. In most parts of the country, the dowry system has not yet changed. The stigma attached to widows, unmarried and childless women still persists. In many cases women are also, to a certain extent, responsible as their treatment towards their daughters and daughters-in-law is not always healthy and does a great damage. Girls in the family are not given the same treatment and opportunities as boys. Therefore, women also, along with men, need to change their attitudes.

Role of Education

If we want to improve upon the status of women in all spheres of life and give them a respectable position in society, proper thinking will have to be developed in our children right from their early childhood. Manubhai Pancholi 'Darshak', a renowned writer and educationist of Gujarat, has rightly said that saints all over the world have preached and tried hard for the betterment and happiness of mankind. In spite of their sincere efforts, why have the expected results not come-up? The reason is that they have always tried to preach the grown-ups. They should have begun with children.

An awareness of men-women equality should be developed from the early childhood. In spite of the spread of education today, an educated woman is not considered equal to an educated man. We may find women workers in various fields but their status is not equal to that of men. A working woman in a family (perhaps earning more) does not enjoy the privileges enjoyed by a man. As education plays a vital role in building up the character of children by moulding their thoughts and preparing them for life, our task could be easier if we begin at the school level. This has also been observed by the committee on the Status of Women in India, ICSSR's programme of Women's Studies, in the following words ;

"The deep foundations of the inequality of sexes are built in the minds of men and women through a socialization process which continues to be extremely powerful. If education is to promote equality for women, it must make a deliberate, planned and sustained effort, so that the new value of equality can replace the traditional value system."

Role of a Textbook

As soon as a child starts going to school he gets associated with teachers and textbooks. These are the two factors contributing a great deal to the building-up of the personality of a child. His textbook is the Bible for him. Whatever is written in the textbooks and said by their teachers, is the truth for small children. These future citizens derive inspiration and philosophy of life from their textbooks. The characters in the textbooks are the ideals for them. They desire to follow them and behave accordingly. Therefore, the focus on the equality of status among men and women in their textbooks will certainly shape their ideas positively.

Textbooks in English at the Upper Primary Stage

Realizing the importance of textbooks in the cultivation of proper values in children we should make the best of textbooks as an effective tool for elevating the status of women

in society. At an early age the minds of children are very receptive and without any prejudices. Therefore, at that stage, it is much easier to appeal to the emotions of children, particularly through language textbooks. The material presented in a language textbook in the form of stories, anecdotes, incidents, plays, dialogues, or simple poems arouses children's interest and leaves lasting impressions on their minds.

Since English is taught as a second language in our schools and as, at the upper primary level, we get lessons written for textbooks, our task becomes easier. Hence, while writing lessons for a particular textbook, if our authors take a little more care, values regarding the promotion of the women's equality could easily be brought in. The textbooks which are in use at present should be evaluated from the point of view of the status of women. All derogatory references in respect of women should be deleted. The teachers should also, on their own, put the status of women in its true perspective.

Suggestions for Textbook Writers

(a) Vigilance against Negative Aspects

The task of textbook writers is a challenging one, as children gather lot many impressions from their textbooks. Care is to be taken that children do not gather undesirable ideas about stereotype image of women from textbooks. If the textbook writer is not constantly aware of this fact, negative aspects, do creep in though unknowingly in textbooks.

Smt. K. Nishchal had studied 300 lessons in different textbooks in English from the point of view of the status of women. Following are some of her findings :

- (i) 181 pictures of male characters and only 9 stories of female dominance.

- (ii) 263 pictures of male characters, 75 pictures of female characters.
- (iii) 88 pictures of both male and female characters all dominated by the males.
- (iv) In all the lessons the inertia of women is evident.
- (v) 78 biographies of male characters, 3 biographies of female characters.
- (vi) 50 percent of the female characters were not even named. They were introduced only with their relationships as mother, sister, grandmother, daughter, maid servant, etc.
- (vii) A female character is never found in a lesson on a scientific theme as if females could never associate themselves with science or any subject of intellectual importance. They are born to be mothers and sisters and at the most nurses or teachers.
- (viii) Portia in "Merchant of Venice", and the queen of Jhansi in Indian scene show bravery in the disguise of a man, as if only men could show bravery. There are some sentences like 'The queen of Jhansi was brought up by her father *like a boy.*' or 'The *best man* on the side of the enemies was the queen of Jhansi'.¹

Such references in textbooks present unrealistic and irrelevant images of women and affect adversely the innocent minds of children. If, from early childhood, it is fixed in the minds of the girls that as grownups they have to do the household work, bring-up children, or at the most, be typists, nurses, teachers, or doctors, they as grown-up females, feel very much confused. They cannot take up challenges and if they happen to be in some non-traditional occupation, they feel extremely embarrassed.

¹*Strinic Manomurtynu Rup*—by Ila R. Bhatti Ahmedabad ; 1979.

A textbook writer has to be careful about such discriminations in choice of subject matter, character portrayal, and exercises given in his textbook.

(b) Characterisation and Presentation

In a textbook characterisation and presentation of the material are important factors. The number of female characters should not be too less compared to the male characters. In most of the evaluations done on textbooks, counting numbers becomes the chief activity. Though important, it is not the only criterion. The variety of roles attributed to women and their treatment are equally important.

Usually the female characters depicted in textbooks are traditional and stereotyped. There should be some change in the attitude towards women. It is necessary to present such modern female characters who walk shoulder to shoulder with males and are capable of taking up any challenge. At the same time our male characters should often be depicted as sharing household duties, to meet the requirement of the changing times.

The presentation of such themes should be so natural that the children accept them as the natural course of life.

(c) Themes

Establishment of the idea of equality between men and women in the minds of children, respect for women in society and acceptance of their feelings, emotions and their individuality—inclusion of such material in a textbook is a challenge.

Following are some model themes for inclusion in textbooks :

- (i) Simple biographies of known as well as unknown women who are outstanding as freedom fighters, social reformers, scientists, sports-women, artists, national leaders, social workers and so on.

- (ii) Cleaning the house on a holiday—the work in which all members of the family, male as well as female, contribute equally.
- (iii) A lesson showing the importance of the duties performed by mother or housewife, as part of the household.
- (iv) A lesson on a visit to a shop or an institution run by women.
- (v) A school function in which a lady judge or a renowned female social worker is the chief guest.
- (vi) A story of a family in which a girl is given good education and training in the area of her interest.
- (vii) A lesson in which mother also has an occupation and everybody in the family shares the household duties.
- (viii) A lesson on a village farm in which men and women work together.

There can be many more themes like these which can be picked up from day to day life. The aim is to establish the identity of women as individuals who also contribute towards the development of society and the nation.

(d) Illustrations

At the elementary level more pictures should be given in the textbooks. If children are repeatedly exposed to the pictures of women working in various fields and the boys and men helping them in their work, they will start accepting women as equal partners in all walks of life.

(e) Exercises and Activities

The questions in the exercises given at the end of each lesson should be so framed that children's attention is drawn towards the equal status of males and females. Moreover,

there could be a question on some 'activity' in which children are asked to do same work jointly in school or at home. In some of the lessons they could be asked to record their own activities at home like helping their mothers in household chores, cleaning the classroom or the school compound or decorating the classroom etc. They could also be asked to gather information regarding the useful activities of working women in their neighbourhood.

Awareness of Teachers and Parents

As our objective is to shape the thinking of young children in the direction of equality of status of both the sexes, the textbook alone would not serve the purpose. Their learning must match with their experiences at home and in society. For this, awareness of teachers and parents towards the changing roles of women in society is also an important factor.

The Status of Women Through the Teaching of English at the Secondary and Senior Secondary Levels

R.L. Gupta

Language is the most important and powerful means of communication. It is central to human experience. Our entire elaborate social structure is mediated through spoken and written language at our disposal. Ideology and philosophy could be interwoven into its texture and reflected in and through it.

Naturally, the inherent potential of such a powerful vehicle of thoughts and feelings could be exploited for the promotion of the status of women if the constitutional commitment of 'equality of opportunity' has to be translated into action.

Language learning and teaching, of course, is different from the learning and teaching of content subjects like social sciences which have focus in imparting knowledge. Language books and methodology, on the other hand, have emphasis on linguistic content. Language is a means through which

we communicate our ideas, thoughts and feelings. However, its scope would vary from stage to stage and depend on whether it is taught as the first, second, or third language. We cannot afford to overload our language books with too much ideational content and less so in the case of the teaching of English as a second or third language. This would make the linguistic content fade into insignificance. And even in the books meant for imparting knowledge one has to be on his guard in giving direct instruction or imparting information, sermonising or speaking from the pulpit. While developing language materials this aspect has to have imperceptibly inbuilt potential which works from within and indirectly helps in bringing about desirable change in the thoughts of the reader.

Nevertheless, there is some scope for indirect inclusion of some values through classroom situations, curricular and co-curricular activities, language textbooks and materials, especially in the light of goals and functional syllabus based on speech acts.

The teaching of English as a second language has deeper implications and methodologically significant dimensions. An inherent ideational content deficiency in the structure of teaching strategy provides an insight into the causes that have been responsible for the deterioration of the standard. In a second language learning situation, Language one (L_1) gets priority and Language two (L_2) has a secondary position.

It is obvious to a discerning mind that this gap has widened considerably. An inclusion of the component, filling in this gap should go a long way in providing strategies of teaching English as a second Language on certain psychologically sound bases and pedagogically effective and empirically efficacious norms, providing the indispensable inbuilt input conducive to and productive of elevated status of women.

Now let us look at the whole pedagogical structure for teaching English as a second language built on the basis of structural syllabus, and suggest how some components could

be strengthened, enriched and made more effective. The pedagogically sound appropriate techniques, suitable devices, course books, supplementary readers, workbooks based on the syllabus and the teaching in the classroom and outside, should contribute towards the attainment of the set objectives.

Moreover, we should not forget that the greatest and most powerful variable that we have to keep in mind constantly is the concept of individual differences. We have to tailor our methods and materials (including the visual element) keeping in view the heterogeneity of the clientele whose needs are to be catered to. Naturally, we have to adopt an approach in language teaching that is so rich in the variety of devices that it leaves the learner with the choice to adopt whatever learning strategy suits him best.

Now if we view the existing situation, the methods and the materials from the point of view of individual differences, sex bias or even total indifference towards women will be clearly perceptible to a discerning eye.

At the structural level :

Ram is more intelligent than Rani.

Hari is the most intelligent boy in the class. (or is the most intelligent of all students in the class)

Suresh is the monitor of the class.

Anita is weaker than Ravi in maths.

Mohan is a boy. His father is a teacher/doctor/social worker/engineer, etc. (no reference is given to his mother)

Although Anita is a girl, she wants to be an engineer.

Anita should clean the room and help her mother. Raju will study.

Anita dear, please clean the room, wash the clothes and clean the utensils. Dear Raju go and read your books. Don't waste time. You should pass your examination with good marks.

Anita, you can't offer maths or science. You are a girl. You can't get admission to an Engineering college.

Rekha helps her mother in the kitchen. Anil helps his father in the shop.

Raju puts on nice clothes. Anita goes about in simple dress.

Lata can't take part in such activities. Girls should not take part in activities like tournament and cricket match etc. Alka likes cooking, Mohan likes swimming/reading, etc. Give milk to Raju and his father, we can do without it.

Sita knows now to cook food or stitch clothes, and so on. Then reported speech as involving only boys.

Dialogues involving boys !

Can't Sita be more intelligent than Hari ?

Why can't the girls get admission to an Engineering College? Can't we have more girls taking part in activities outside home ?

The prescribed books, course books, workbooks, supplementary readers, rapid readers, etc., also reveal sex bias. The authors of these books, it seems, do not keep in mind their differing clientele. In villages and small towns most schools are co-educational and the prescribed books unfortunately do not cater to the needs of girl students at all. Sometimes the themes, the presentation, the pictures, etc., seem to be rather alien to them in view of their tastes, needs, aspirations, rendering the whole text unsuitable for a very large number of girls who form about fifty per cent of the student population at the secondary and higher secondary stages. This imbalance has to be corrected and the references affecting adversely the image of women have to be identified and eliminated from the textbooks prescribed for secondary and higher secondary schools of the country.

Research work in this area is rather scanty but it can be proved by studies that the authors of many of these books

have been men who have not been mindful of the clientele, their interests and expectations. Perhaps, consciously or unconsciously, they have lost sight of this functional aspect. It may be quite natural, but to do justice to the assignment of writing a lesson one has to resist this temptation of projecting the stereo-typed image of women and ensure that the different clientele get their due representation. The bias creeps in, finds expression and operates in a negative way in the selection of themes, their nature, type and quantum, their presentation, semantic interpretation of utterances in a particular situation. It also influences even the physical aspects like pictures, the shapes and sizes, and also the gestures and actions of the characters involved.

If one goes deep in scrutinising the situation an imbalance is quite discernible even in the co-curricular and extra-curricular activities organised in schools. Girls, unfortunately, operate as passive listeners and silent observers. There does not seem to be much provision for their equal participation and involvement in such activities that are meant to provide them suitable experiences and exposure. This has eaten into the vitals of the major part of our student population, making them inactive and docile and thus defeating the very purpose of educating them. Anything that denigrate the image of women has to be completely rooted out and suitable inputs be provided to act in a positive way through appropriate methods and materials to restore and elevate the status of women.

Although, the teacher, the material-producer, and the textbook writer have to operate under certain constraints at the initial stage, yet ways and means can be devised to supply the desirable and necessary input. After some time some of the constraints may be relaxed as the learner advances and becomes more competent in linguistic content. At the secondary and senior secondary stage, the task becomes easier because of the maturity level and attainment of the learner. Here the choice of topics and themes could be wider. In fact, the maturity and linguistic competence demand and necessitate inclusion of suitable themes which should have the

potential of motivating the learner's interest and sustaining it through out. There is no reason why reading material in a foreign language should not be of intrinsic interest to the learners provided what is made available to them has been chosen to suit their interest. If there is material that people want to read in their mothertongue, there ought to be similar material that they would want to read in the second or foreign language.

Providing Equal Opportunities to Boys and Girls

While developing the materials for this age group, one can ensure that both male and female characters are represented in a balanced way. The girls need not necessarily be shown doing household chores and boys being depicted as working outside. The stereotyped image of a woman cooking, sewing, washing or ironing the clothes can gradually be replaced by women working as doctors, engineers, politicians, lawyers etc.

While asking the students to write paragraphs, notes, or essays such topics can be suggested as may be helpful in bridging the existing gap between the clearly demarcated activities. Involvement of girls at different stages of teaching can be ensured through encouraging them to participate in conversation, language games, competitions, language lab drills, making sentences or writing paragraphs on given points.

Through co-curricular and extra-curricular activities

While organizing debates, functions or celebrations, prayer assembly, essay competitions, one-act plays, etc. care has to be taken to see that girls and boys are offered topics of their interest and choice. Their participation has to be ensured. Girls have to be given encouragement and incentive. More opportunities are to be provided to them and their efforts appreciated and rewarded. Variety has to be brought in through suitable and effective devices to secure good results. Short descriptions not showing any favour to a male child or looking down upon girls in life may be useful. The content should help promote sex harmony by describing how a certain

family co-operates in preparing food, maintaining the house, washing, cleaning, etc.

Thematic content, biographies of Mira Bai, Panna Dai, Ahilya Bai, Nur Jahan, Rani of Jhansi, Sarojini Naidu and contribution of some of the modern women leaders and social workers like Mother Teresa, etc. could be made use of. They are more suitable if an interesting form of a dramatic scene or one-act play is devised for the purpose. The themes and ideational content involved should be proportionate and may also include stories, biographies and autobiographies of women who have contributed towards the progress of mankind. The material could be adopted, adapted, simplified and abridged to suit to the level of the learner in view of the objectives and the language content to be included. It has to have some priorities and emphasis. Certain things precede while others follow. They get more premium while others are considered less significant. More important ideational content is presented in such a way that it contributes towards the oneness of the theme, its coherence and seems as a means to attain the objective of communication. Less effective and inappropriate presentation can play havoc with the theme. It might act adversely, dilute and distort the message and thus defeat the purpose.

Co-existence and inter-dependence of both the sexes could be brought home to the learner at the threshold of consciousness level, through interesting episodes, anecdotes, dialogues, conversations, descriptions—at breakfast, at dinner etc. It should help considerably in opening new horizons and broadening their outlook and changing their perception.

As the pendulum has swung to the other extreme, it has to be stretched in the other direction a little further so as to bring about and maintain balance. Awareness on the part of the teacher of English as a second language should go a long way in bringing about the desirable attitudinal change in the learner and thus restoring the prosperity of mankind.