

## **Gender Sensitive Practices in Kerala- Educating Student Teachers**

**Dr. Smitha Eapen**

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor of Education (Social Science), Mount Tabor Training College,  
Pathanapuram, Kollam, Kerala.

Email- socialscience2008@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

Kerala, God's country, has been in the limelight for various reasons. The country has achieved a lot in the education and health sectors. The country was declared fully literate in 1991. The country has been singled out as a model for development due to its strong social matrixes. The Government of Kerala allocates huge expenditures to nurture new and innovative learning experiences for every child. Educational institutions subject to higher education are mixed. The state's teacher education institutions are co-educational, and the curriculum is formulated to encourage gender-responsive education. Most teacher education institutions have 90 percent female students.

Recognizing the diverse roles, responsibilities, and obligations of both men and women in society as well as their interactions, it is important to understand and be sensitive to social and cultural norms and distinctions. This is what it means to be gender sensitive. Kerala society was matrilineal in the cases where we follow Marumakatayam. A summary report published by the Government of India's Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2009\* indicated that in 2006, Kerala ranked third among Indian states in the Gender Development Index, GDI, with a score of 0.745. Kudumbashree is just one of the examples of gender sensitive projects in Kerala. The Kerala State Commission for Protection of Child Rights took the latest gender-sensitive decisions in the state when it mandated that all educational institutions in the state be converted into co-ed or co-ed schools and that boys-only and only schools may soon become a thing of the past. In order to make the campus more welcoming to women and attentive to their needs, the Kerala government has decided to grant menstrual leave and maternity leave to female students.

Consciousness is the state or quality of being aware of something. Teacher education plays a key role in sensitizing stakeholders to the timely need for gender-sensitive practices. Student teachers, the architects of the future society, should be aware Innovative gender-sensitive practices. The study is an honest effort to determine whether student teachers are aware of gender-sensitive practices in the state. An online survey was conducted among fifty student teachers of 40 female teachers and 10 male teachers. The questionnaire consists of yes/no questions. Percentage analysis was used to analyze the responses. The responses showed that about 95% were aware of recent gender-sensitive practices. The results led to a scope of gender awareness practices to be incorporated into teacher education curricula and also the establishment of incubation centers to create gender sensitive projects to provide solutions to existing issues in the state.

**Keywords :** *Gender Sensitive Practices, Awareness, Students - Teachers , Kerala*

### **1.Introduction**

It is a known fact that women in society play two distinct roles: selfless caregiver and independent wage-earner. Unfortunately, the society in which the woman lives offers little or no support in her constant struggle to balance the two. Most of the time, they are not given the same basic economic, social and even legal rights as their male counterparts. Gender equality and the empowerment of women was the third of the eight Millennium Development Goals as a result of this observation. Kerala's success was the result of the practice of matrilineal property inheritance among some upper-caste segments of the population. Surveys have revealed that Kerala has successfully resisted the centuries-old trends in India.

**Definition of Gender Sensitivity**

Recognizing the diverse rights, obligations and responsibilities of men and women in society and the relationships between them requires an understanding and consideration of social and cultural norms and discrimination.

**Indicators of Gender Sensitive services :**

Avoid discriminating against or profiling customers on the basis of their gender or gender, and treat every customer with respect,

Training all employees to respect gender differences,

Ensuring that women are represented fairly.

Gender awareness can start at home and be nurtured at school in these ways:

**At home**

Developing gender sensitivity is a concept that starts at home.

1. They treat their children as sons and daughters.
2. Encourage children to use toys that are suitable for both sexes.
3. Tell them the gender and show respect for the opposite sex.
4. Encourage children to play with people of both sexes.
5. Giving children the opportunity to speak and respond to their inquiries in order to encourage gender awareness.

**At school**

NCERT ("National Council for Educational Research and Training") worked with the "Ministry of Human Resource Development", "Ministry of Women and Child Development" and other ministries to ensure that schools are gender sensitive by ensuring that all textbooks followed gender neutral design. Teachers strongly support gender-sensitive classrooms. Here are some of the tried and true methods they use:

1. Encouraging male and female students to take the lead in the class.
2. Assemble "mixed" groups for activities regardless of gender.
3. Ensure that boys and girls perform all class duties equally, including cleaning, moving furniture, obtaining class supplies, etc.
4. Organizing activities and events that promote cooperation between the two sexes and respect their needs .

**2.Need and Significance of the study**

Today, most people around the world agree that gender equality and gender awareness are important for growth. Men and women still have a long way to go before they gain the same rights and opportunities, despite the fact that women have made progress and now have a voice in society, business, and politics. Globally, the average wage for women in the workforce is still 24% lower than for men. Women account for only 22% of all national legislators as of August 2015. In India, women hold only 14% of the 542 seats in the Lok Sabha. 35% of women worldwide have experienced violence in a relationship.

Discrimination still exists in India and is evident in every social class. Although the constitution stipulates women's equality, they lack legal protection.

One of the basic necessities for holistic development is gender awareness. An individual may fail to understand the requirements of the opposite sex, and in some extreme circumstances, even themselves if they are not sensitive to the demands of that gender. Since the dawn of time, people have recognized and felt the need for this sensitivity in almost all aspects of human existence. People become more aware of the intelligence of women through the process of gender awareness. In addition, women often believe that they are not inferior to men and can play an equal role in making decisions for the family, society, and organization. It is a way of thinking that promotes consideration for others as well as empathy.

**3.Review of Related Literature**

(Barnali Baruah), 2019, In order to ensure that all young Indians are aware of and respect human rights, this article will discuss how higher education institutions in India are working to educate students about gender issues. It will do this by referring to laws and programs established by governments and organizations to encourage gender equality and equality in the academic community. Secondary data

obtained from journals, government directories, books, official reports, electronic media, and newspapers form the basis of the research.

We can learn more about the many gender disparities that led the 2016 Global Gender Gap Report to rank India 108th. The main reason for reducing disparities in educational attainment and occupational segregation was highlighted as the devaluation of women's work. For example, caregiving and nursing are mostly female-dominated professions that are sometimes undervalued and viewed as "normal" female characteristics. In Kerala, women have made use of their female capital by working in the economy, although primarily in the care and service industries. These areas of work show how women's career choices interact with social and gender norms.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To learn about gender sensitive programmes in India and Kerala.
2. To check awareness about sensitive practices among student teachers.
3. To propose measures that ensure gender-sensitive practices.

### **3. Methodology**

The methodology follows a descriptive nature and uses quantitative methodology. Mostly online data and resources have been used to find out what gender sensitive programs are in Kerala and how to use gender sensitive practices as suggested by the ILO.

A questionnaire was used to collect student teachers' opinions with the aim of collecting information related to their awareness of the practices followed in the country. A Google form was used to collect responses from (N=100) student-teachers from different subjects of 2 different semesters doing B.Ed course under the University of Kerala which constitutes a representative sample.

### **4. Analysis of secondary data about Gender Sensitive Programmes in India and Kerala**

In India, the concept of gender has been embraced when creating policy frameworks and curricula. After independence, a number of committees promoted the requirement of gender parity at all educational levels. Promoting gender parity in education was strongly emphasized by the Kothari Commission, National Education Policy and Action Program of 1992. The National Education Policy placed a strong emphasis on using education as a catalyst for fundamental transformation of the status of women. For trainers at the university and college levels, the India XI plan proposes training sessions, talks, workshops and other events to increase their sensitivity to gender issues.

The government also conducts numerous research projects and routinely hosts lectures, workshops, seminars, conferences, community service projects, and programs to promote gender equality. Regularly offer instructors a refresher course for women's studies at UGC. The Indian government is integrating gender-sensitive OSH ("occupational safety and health") content into adult education programs and curricula of higher education institutions, as well as conducting awareness campaigns to disseminate information about workplace risks and hazards.

The Ministry of Human Resources and Development is updating the curriculum, including gender-sensitive materials and modules in the annual in-service teacher training and teaching young women self-defense in physical education courses. India's Ministry of Women, Child Development and Human Resource Development has launched an initiative to find gender champions among college students across the country. These individuals will be responsible for educating girls and boys about gender issues and strengthening their ability to advocate for gender equality.

Educational institutions can set up gender advocacy clubs working on projects such as creating a blog or website about gender equality and publishing a regular column on gender issues, which might include telling stories about exceptional girls, boys, and transgender people who have changed girls' lives. and women or write about government laws and programmes. Students may be inspired to show their support for gender justice and equality through workshops, plays, films, college- or university-sponsored youth festivals, or other events with a similar theme. People's attitudes and behaviors can change as a result of students being

exposed to visits to public service institutions at the block, village, city, and district levels, as well as public health clinics, post offices, hospitals, and police stations, to raise awareness of gender issues. Gender Champions should arrange for other students to receive basic life skills training and knowledge about public services already in place. An organization's annual activity schedule may include programs promoting gender equality on any two days each week. To assist the work of gender advocates, institutions will designate one or more teachers as nodal teachers.

Since the time of the Seventh Plan, the Women's Studies program in the country has been supported, strengthened, and directed by the University Grants Commission (UGC). In order to evaluate policies and strategies to enhance gender sensitivity, the UGC established a working group in January 2015. The UGC has helped universities establish equal opportunity cells to overcome the successful implementation of programs and policies for underrepresented groups and provide advice in financial, social and academic, as well as other domains. The Cell hosts programs to educate colleges and universities about issues experienced by the ST, SC, and OBC communities in higher education.

Gender sensitization in higher education was mentioned in the draft National Women's Policy – 2016, and it also became an important recommendation for “Saksham – measures to ensure the safety of women and gender sensitization programs on campuses,” according to the UGC Principles report released in 2013. The guidelines call for Scotsham aims to integrate gender issues into existing curricula. Real and current cases of women's disenfranchisement should be included, as well as an examination of how these conditions impede their opportunities to advance professionally. A session on gender awareness and sexual harassment concerns should be included in the orientation training offered by higher education institutions for principals. For the safety and well-being of students, it is their duty to select medical and security staff who have undergone gender awareness training. Higher education institutions must provide advisory services through trained full-time advisors. Information on gender equality and sexual harassment should be included in the prospectus and posted widely in visible places, such as bulletin boards, to provide a safe and secure environment on campus. Case studies on the gender pay gap in management education can be included. While engineering courses can draw attention to the low percentage of female students and discuss how professions have been stereotyped on the basis of gender, students studying journalism, hotel management, and other related fields may be asked to investigate the effects of late-night shifts For women and girls. the safety risks they pose. Teachers should provide students with articles written by female academics that have been published in scientific publications to help bridge the gender gap in science and technology.

#### **Gender Sensitive Practices in Kerala**

1. BODHYAM (2019) - The aim of 'Bodhyam' is to train police officers to be gender sensitive and empathetic. Bodiam also aims to develop the relationship between the police force and the Mithra 181 helpline to promote a safer environment for women in the state.
2. Women Cell -KSWDC plans to set up a women's cell for the cause in 80 colleges across Kerala. The cell's mission is to educate women about their rights and responsibilities. It also provides a forum for women to express their experiences and perspectives on gender inequality, their social status, and strategies for empowering themselves. The goal of the women's cell is intellectual enrichment and
3. Kudumbasri is a community established by the Government of Kerala to combat poverty and empower women. The facilities management centers in Kudumbassery have partnered with KMRL to provide trained women to work on the front lines.
4. The Kerala State Police has also implemented measures such as Vanitha Police, pink patrols, monitoring rooms, installation of CCTV cameras, all aimed at involving women and monitoring public spaces.
5. KSRTC and MVD are building the SURAKSHA-MITRA Command and Control Center, which will be equipped with real-time bus tracking and emergency buttons. KSRTC began hiring female leaders and drivers in 1992. Conductors make up 15%

of all conductors. They also made gender awareness training and night shelters mandatory.

6. According to KSCPCR (“Kerala State Committee for the Protection of Child Rights”), the use of the term “teacher” is more gender neutral, can help in promoting equality among students, and improves children’s attachment to their teachers.

7. In order to reduce representations that encourage gender stereotypes and categorization of roles in society, Kerala State is planning to conduct a gender assessment of existing textbooks.

8. GET-UP (Girl Empowerment Training)

It is a unique curriculum that focuses on the holistic development of girls in primary, secondary and tertiary education institutions. As part of this strategy, girls' clubs will be set up in every school. The entire program will be conducted with a research approach. Choose two students from each class and from the Girls Club. Girls in grades 6-8 can start a small club, while students in grades 9-12 can join a large club. The organizer of the school club is the teacher in charge of the help desk, and the coordinator is the leader of the institution. The secretary and the president represent the female students. An incoming member and the PTA/SMC Chair, as well as the mothers of two PTA members, are ex officio members. These clubs can organize focused events.

9. Earlier this month, the Kerala government stated that there was no regulation requiring teachers to wear sari, with Higher Education Minister R Bindu stating that such a practice of requiring teachers to wear sari is not conducive to the modern thinking of Kerala. The minister stressed that one's choice of clothing is entirely a personal matter, and no one has the right to judge or interfere in another's clothing choices.

10. According to a senior official in the Ministry of Education, the Government's policy is to encourage gender neutrality and will fully support any school that proposes to implement such gender-neutral uniforms.

11. The year 2023 began with a surprise from the Department of Higher Education, which issued a decision approving menstruation and maternity leave for students enrolled in universities affiliated with the department.

### Google Form : Findings

#### Awareness among Student Teachers about Gender Sensitive Practices in Kerala

One of the objective was to identify the awareness of gender sensitive praactices in Kerala.The results of google form is represented in a table .The responses are of Yes/No type and then briefly interpreted descriptively with the help of percentage analysis.

**Table 1 Awareness of 100 Student Teachers in Percentage**

Awareness	RESPONSES
	Yes
1.Role of Kudumbashree	97 (97%)
2.GET scheme in high schools	25 (25%)
3.Dress code of teachers in educational institutions	72 (72%)
4.Gender stereotypes in textbooks	33 (33%)
5.Maternity leave for students	81 (81%)
6.Menstrual leave	94 (94%)
7.Reforms in KSRTC	86 (86%)
8.New policies by UGC	38 (38%)
9.Activities of Women’s Cell	99 (99%)
10.Usage of gender neutral terms	73 (73%)

An analysis of responses to a Google questionnaire from 100 student teachers (Table 1)revealed that:

- 1.97% of student teachers were aware of the role of Kudumbashree in ensuring gender sensitivity.
2. 25% revealed that they were aware of GET in schools.
3. 72% were aware that the dress code for teachers does not have to be a mandatory saree.
4. 33% do not know about gender stereotypes in textbooks.
5. 81% have been informed about maternity leave.
- 6.Menstrual leave information created news and so 94% have been informed.
- 7.86% are aware about the reforms in KSRTC that lead to support gender sensitivity.
- 8.38% are only aware about the new policies for gender sensitivity by UGC.
- 9.Majority of the student teachers are aware about activities of Women’s Cell as most of them are females and directly involved in these activities in their institution.
10. The student teachers (73%) are familiar that the society should use of gender neutral terms.

**Figure 1 Responses of 100 student teachers with regard to awareness of gender sensitive practices**

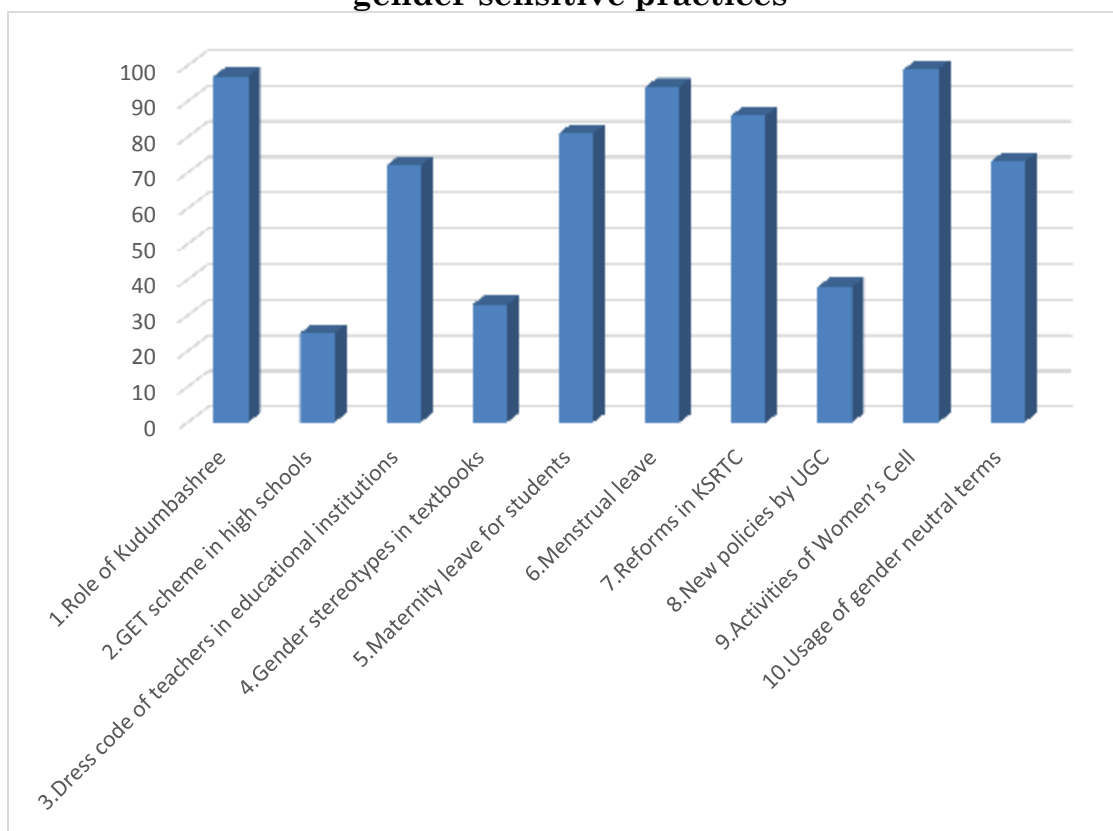


Figure 1 shows that majority of the student teachers are aware about the gender sensitive practices in the state which reveals that they are interested in collecting information which affects their morale ,emotional intelligence and thereby their integrity.

### Gender Balance Strategy

The United Nations implements a gender balance policy, which includes special measures such as training courses for women, targeted recruitment and promotion, and numerical targets. All aim to eliminate past and contemporary prejudices against women while achieving gender balance in recruitment and promotion.

It is possible to increase the number of qualified applicants while at the same time eliminating bias from the recruitment process by using personnel selection criteria.

The Existing Employees Survey provides information on organizational obstacles to hiring and retaining employees.

The United Nations has called for work-life balance and flexible working arrangements, such as staggered working hours. Work schedule pressure, scheduled break for extended learning activities, telecommuting, part-time work,

adoption leave, parental leave as special leave without pay, breastfeeding policy, special leave in circumstances of death or emergency.

UN Women hosts expert group meetings to discuss the latest cutting-edge research and policy advances on equitable representation of women. The sessions provide key opportunities to discuss the many difficulties that exist, as well as to learn from the best practices of stakeholders and partners.

Measures of the ILO and the United Nations can be scaled back or adapted to local conditions to ensure gender equality.

### **Implications**

#### 1. Breach of Limitations

Higher education is an advanced stage of human learning. Once you finish school and join the university, you are placed in an environment made up of adults. Traditionally, women have been forced to limit their interaction with the outside world. Perhaps out of fear that women might use their mental faculties and challenge existing social institutions. However, when women are placed in heterogeneous settings such as universities, they are able to explore beyond the traditional constraints placed on them. Self-esteem issues that plague women when interacting with people and engaging in various activities are effectively addressed.

#### 2. Educate others about gender

Gender education through higher education should not be limited to women. Many universities have introduced curricula that focus on narrow ideas that have taken root in the patriarchal society. It needs to be emphasized that we have come to terms with patriarchy and misogyny to such an extent that we often ignore the subtle manifestations of it. To create a world that is aware of the issues women face just because they are women, it is necessary to educate and train men on these issues. It must be sensitive to women's issues through comprehensive programs. Universities like Oakland University, DePaul University, and Arizona State University are known for their gender studies programs.

#### 3. Better participation in the workforce

Orthodoxy asserts that women are mentally and physically inferior and cannot generate results as effective as those achieved by men. This notion is deeply rooted in misogyny and patriarchy and was sparked by paranoia that women could upset the long-established traditional framework. As a result, women were prevented from participating in the labor force. However, with the expansion of education and scholarships in higher education, women have become entrenched to participate and contribute. Women's access to higher education has increased women's financial independence and improved career and personal development opportunities.

#### 4. Realization of rights

Women have long been denied the right to vote. Much of this deprivation stemmed from the fact that they were legally treated as "personal property" and reduced to mere property. In India, for example, the colonial adultery law, now decriminalized, treated adultery as trespassing on the husband's property when his wife was involved in adultery. Since the 19th century, the women's empowerment movement has gained momentum and universities have been at the forefront. Student movements around the world have fought and won many battles for the welfare of women. This could have happened only in the presence of the intellectual discourse encouraged by higher education institutions. Today, universities are involved in empowering women with tools to exercise their rights. Women are beginning to question the status quo and demand answers, and the right to know is one of many rights that women are actively exercising to fulfill others.

### **Conclusion**

Kerala is one of the Indian states that has bucked national trends by offering a development model that is more open and inclusive to women. The Channar Lahala or Channar rebellion, also known as Maru Makkal Samaram, took place in Kerala and is referred to as the battle of the Nadar mountaineering women for the right to wear upper body clothing in the Travancore kingdom of India from 1813 to 1859. Need for legislation And measures that can determine the actual influence of women in the state and the amount of this power that can be translated. While the

system cannot be completely ignored , there is a need to move forward with the institutional structure created by the patriarchy and ensure that gender sensitivity is being taken care.

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