

GENDER EQUITY IN INDIAN SOCIETY AND SOLUTION

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ABSTRACT:-

Gender equality" means equality between men and women; the freedom to develop and make choices unhindered by gender stereotypes, roles and prejudices; that the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities do not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equity in practicality refers to both male and female concerns, yet most of the gender bias is against women in the developing world. Gender discrimination in education has been very evident and underlying problem in many countries, especially in developing countries. Equity in education of women also reduces the possibilities of trafficking and exploitation of women Gender discrimination continues to be an enormous problem within Indian society. Traditional patriarchal norms have relegated women to secondary status within the household and workplace. This drastically affects women's health, financial status, education, and political involvement.

KEY WORDS:- Gender, Equity, Women. Discrimination,, Workplace, Education

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INTRODUCTION Gender equity¹: According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary (7th ed., 1982) equity means fairness and it is also a recourse to principles of justice to correct or supplement law. It is in this sense that specific measures must be designed to eliminate inequalities between women and men, discrimination and to ensure equal opportunities. Gender equity is a set of actions, attitudes, and assumptions that provide opportunities and create expectations about individuals. In our definition of gender equity, gender is never separate from race, ethnicity, language, disability, income, or other diversities that define us as human beings. It offers a framework for educational reform in which all females and males

- are engaged, reflective learners, regardless of the subject
- are prepared for future education, jobs, careers, and civic participation
- set and meet high expectations for themselves and others
- develop as respectful, inclusive, and productive individuals, friends, family members, workers, and citizens
- receive equitable treatment and achieve equitable outcomes in school and beyond¹

Gender discrimination continues to be an enormous problem within Indian society. Traditional patriarchal norms have relegated women to secondary status within the household and workplace. This drastically affects women's health, financial status, education, and political involvement. Women are commonly married young, quickly become mothers, and are then burdened by stringent domestic and financial responsibilities. They are frequently malnourished since women typically are the last member of a household to eat and the last to receive medical attention. Additionally, only 54 percent of Indian women are literate as compared to 76 percent of men. Women receive little schooling, and suffer from unfair and biased inheritance and divorce laws. These laws prevent women from accumulating substantial financial assets, making it difficult for women to establish their own security and autonomy².

Gang rape isn't the only issue: Sex-selective abortion, sexual harassment and child marriage are also creating disparities in the world's largest democracy. Shocked by a brutal rape case that has gripped the country, India is going through some soul-searching about its shameful mistreatment of women. Rape happens everywhere, but India is a particularly tough place to be female.

Over 40 percent of the child marriages in the world take place in India. Sex selective abortions

occur there at staggering rates. In 2011, the gender ratio was at its most imbalanced since India's 1947 independence: among children six years old or under, there were only 914 girls per every 1,000 boys. Increases in wealth and literacy have only exacerbated the problem of female feticide.

Sexual harassment of women -- known in India by its euphemism, "eve-teasing" -- is widespread and includes behaviours ranging from lewd remarks to physical assault. In a recent *Hindustan Times* survey of 356 New Delhi women who take public transport, 78 percent of them reported having been sexually harassed in the past year.

According to the *New York Times*, rape in India has risen about 25 percent over the past few years; increased reporting partly explains that rise; but some have speculated that it is also driven by the realities of a modernizing society that brings women into public spaces and professional life in greater numbers, phenomena that some young men view as threatening. Interestingly, a 1960 *Time* magazine article describing the "eve-teasing" problem also cited a society in transition as a contributing factor.

Such procedural improvements are welcome, but India needs a broader cultural shift that revalue's the lives of girls and women. Appalling levels of female feticide, female illiteracy, child marriage, and condoned violence against women are the harsh reality that Indian women confront, and unless addressed, will hold the country back in the 21st century.³

Gender is defined as distinct from sex in that it refers to the social and cultural constructs which, while based on the biological sex of a person, defines his or her roles in society⁴ thus gender-based violence is taken to mean the violence which is inflicted on a person because of their biological sex. In a parallel sense, a society in which there was no discrimination against anyone based on his or her sex could be said to have achieved gender equality, and more generally, gender equality could be defined as full equality between the sexes. A more rights-based definition of gender equality can be developed with reference to two of the fundamental international instruments in this regard: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁵ declares that all humans are born free and equal, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women⁶ refers to this declaration in its second paragraph, while repeating the terms "equal rights of men and women" and "equality of rights of men and women" at least

four times in the first five paragraphs, reaching the “full equality of men and women” in the final opening paragraphs before Article 1. CEDAW goes on to enumerate the “same rights” and the “same opportunities” which must be available to all men and women in various fields of human activity, including but not limited to education, marital legislation, and labour. Thus, the concept of gender equality may be taken to primarily refer to the full equality of men and women to enjoy the complete range of political, economic, civil, social and cultural rights, with no one being denied access to these rights, or deprived of them, because of their sex.

However, to achieve such full equality in a meaningful and real sense, equality under the law is simply not sufficient, though vitally necessary. The historically inferior position of women, the all-too-often unfavourable cultural and traditional context and the social roles must be taken into account: “Formal or de jure equality, which involves simply “adding women” to the existing paradigms is an inadequate response to women’s inequality. Realizing women’s substantive or de facto equality involves addressing the institutionalized nature of women’s disadvantage and changing the cultural, traditional and religious beliefs that typecast women as inferior to men. It also means recognizing that notions of masculinity and femininity are interdependent...”⁷ Although not explicitly using the term gender, the concept is clear in the phrase “notions of masculinity and femininity”, and the message seems to be that as development practitioners, we should recognise the “gendered” stereotypes which prevent achievement of full equality between the sexes, and attempt to redress them.

Various development institutions have built on this concept to develop their own “working definitions” of the term gender equality, as part of the global “gender mainstreaming” initiatives which have been taking place since the 1990s⁸. For example, AusAID defines gender equality as ...the equal valuing of the roles of women and men. It works to overcome the barriers of stereotypes and prejudices so that both sexes are able to equally contribute to and benefit from economic, social, cultural and political developments within society. When women and men have relative equality, economies grow faster and there is less corruption. ...Men and women are physically different but it is the social, economic, political and legal interpretation of these differences that lead to inequality between them.⁹

While CIDA offers a more prosaic approach:

Equality between women and men or gender equality—promoting the equal participation of women and men in making decisions; supporting women and girls so that they can fully exercise their rights; and reducing the gap between women’s and men’s access to and control of resources and the benefits of development—is still out of reach for most women worldwide.

It is interesting how CIDA emphasizes the rights-based approach, while the AusAID definition highlights the “barriers of stereotypes and prejudice“ as the main cause of inequality. Another noteworthy comment in the CIDA definition is the mention of “access to and control of resources“ and “reducing the gap“ which will be returned to in the discussion of gender equity. And finally, the UN Millenium Taskforce on MDG3 Gender Equality offers a highly technical definition for this concept, identifying three main “domains“ as an operational framework: capabilities, which refers to basic human abilities as measured by education, health, and nutrition; access to resources and opportunities, (both political and economic, such as equal rights on land and property) and finally and of great interest but outside the scope of this essay, the issue of security and the vulnerability of women and girls to violence. The inclusion of this domain in the definition of gender equality is justified by explaining that such vulnerability significantly reduces the abilities of individuals and households to realise their full potential in other spheres. All these definitions, while varying in wording and complexity, are based on the equality of sexes in the political, economic, social and cultural domain, and thus ultimately have their roots in the rights-based worldview outlined at the beginning of this essay, while directly or indirectly hinting at the conflictual implications of equality in regards to the various barriers of gender stereotypes¹⁰.

WHO defines gender equity as “fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men, and indeed the term gender equity seems often juxtaposed to social justice. In general, one receives the impression that while gender equality is used to refer to the overarching canopy of equal rights and opportunities, together with corresponding lack of gender discrimination in all spheres of human activity, gender equity has a more narrow application and strongly economic or rather, material connotations. In other words, gender equity appears to be one of the many building blocks on the path to achieve gender equality. For example, in *Equality for Women* published by the World Bank, equity is used primarily to refer to numeric indicators of equality as crystallised by the Gender Equity Index

(GEI) which covers indicators across the fields of education (social dimension), income and share of job market (economic dimension), and share of members of parliament and high-paid jobs (political dimension).

There is without doubt a strong socio-economic aspect to the term “gender equity”, which has been also defined as “individual’s access to, and control over resources’- recalling incidentally CIDA’s definition of gender equality quoted above. Razavi and Miller provide a detailed elaboration on how equity was considered `synergistic` with efficiency, and was thus used by proponents of women’s rights to convince development planners in the seventies to include women in aid and development. As rightly critiqued by the article, this convergence of equity and efficiency, however strategically convenient in drawing the attention of economists to gender issues, falls apart when it becomes apparent that in many situations, equity does not correlate to efficiency, or indeed may even hinder it.

Moser places equity as the second phase of WID, after the welfare approach. The equity approach focused on the subordination of women to men not just in the family, but also in the marketplace, and considered economic independence as synonymous with equity, together with reduction of the inequality between men and women. According to Moser, the equity approach suffered from the hostility of development practitioners (who seemed as sceptical as Razavi and Miller on the alignment of equity and efficiency), lack of guarantees for its implementation in practice, and the fact that it seemed to meet potential, rather than actual strategic gender needs- and that through a top-down legislative approach- arousing the ire of those ready to cry imperialism and Western interference. It seems based on such analyses that that the equity approach in development is dismissed as passé and “deeply flawed” because “lacking rigorous gendered analysis“ by Jain

Yet there are scholars who are profoundly dissatisfied with such definitions and even seek to reverse the relative positioning of gender equality and gender equity as outlined above. This dissatisfaction appears to stem primarily with their fundamental problem in accepting Western notions of “human rights“ as a universal good, linking them with specifically western philosophies of individualism and liberalism. “Equality between men or even between women in certain circumstances may be iniquitous...we need to politicize equality and develop an equity

framework that enables us and our various societies to address the needs of people –men and women- in an equitable way, bearing in mind the differential impact of race, class, age and other constraints on power relations“. Thus it is argued that equality, as discussed above, is part and parcel of the wider discourse of human rights and is appropriated as such by various Western (and Australian (!)) development institutions and agencies, and that furthermore it is one of the set of `particularistic normative standards` which cannot be neutral or universal, but are historically and culturally western notions. Not that that need lessen its effectiveness and value, as is further argued in the same article.¹¹

Indeed, there seems to be a conscious move away from the loaded term of gender equality and towards gender equity as a more value-neutral and useful concept in, for example, the selection of articles presented in *Women and Gender Equity in Development Theory and Practice*. As shown by Jaquette and Summerfield, the concept of gender equity remains relevant, though perhaps no longer as part of a purely WID discourse. The concept retains its socioeconomic connotations, as in the article “Gender Equity and Rural Land Reform“ which discusses the implications of land reform in rural China for women, the progress made and the shortcomings still to be met. In this article, the term gender equity is used to refer to the equitable or otherwise treatment of women and men under the law as regards farm property rights¹².

A UNESCO AGENDA FOR GENDER EQUALITY

The UNESCO **Agenda for Gender Equality** introduces ways of combining the universal and the particular. It articulates women's common aspirations for equality and the respect for cultural plurality .UNESCO, within its fields of competence and in co-operation with Member States and other partners, thereby commits itself to:

- 1. Promote education for women's self empowerment** at all levels and in all fields by assisting Member States to ensure equal access to relevant quality education and training for girls and women, including the development of distance education as an effective means of reaching the unreached. The right to education is a fundamental human right. Universal primary education and adult literacy for girls and women pave the way to personal fulfilment, economic self-reliance and full citizens
- 2. Encourage the equal access to knowledge** in all fields, notably within science and technology, and increase women's participation in higher education and training programmes .More women's

participation is needed in decisions relating to research, development, use and control of science and technology. Access to water, particularly in the rural areas, as well as the development of alternative

renewable energy resources, especially solar energy, is crucial for the rational management of dwindling natural resources and for the alleviation of the drudgeries of the lives of poor women and men.

3. Support women's human rights by strengthening initiatives for a broader ratification and a more effective implementation of normative instruments pertaining to women, notably, the CEDAW. Encourage Member States to acknowledge the principle of gender equality and *inter alia*, to integrate 'legal literacy' for girls and women at all levels of the educational system.

4. Promote the attainment of gender parity, women's full citizenship and equal participation in policymaking as a prerequisite for true democracy at the local, national and international levels. Assist in the elimination of stereotyped roles and expectations, with a view to promote more equitable sharing of responsibilities and rights in the family and in society at large.

5. Foster partnership and dialogue, and develop a new gender contract, underlining the long-term gains from the social transformation towards gender-sensitive societies. Women and men in partnership hold the reins of development in their joint capacity to fight poverty and exclusion, rethink Gender Equality and Equity

and humanise the goals and means of development. Equal and equitable participation of women and men in all decision-making, whether in the home, in the community or in society at large, is essential to the world's survival and well-being.

6. Mainstream a gender perspective in the conceptualisation, implementation and evaluation of policies relating to development and peace and security. Collect and analyse gender-specific statistical data while developing appropriate indicators and guidelines. This will assist Member States in monitoring progress made towards the promotion and development of more gender-sensitive societies.

7. Encourage women's creativity and freedom of expression by, *inter-alia*, supporting women's activities and research within UNESCO's fields of competence. Further promote relevant training opportunities, capacity building, women's NGOs and networking initiatives for the exchange of information and experience, focusing in particular on women artists, artisans and journalists.

8. Support a **pluralistic and editorially independent media** by favouring the broad and active participation of women in decision-making and by encouraging more diversified, realistic and non-discriminatory images of women. Promote gender equality in order to 'advance the mutual knowledge and understanding of all peoples, through all means of mass communication', as stated in UNESCO's Constitution.

9. Assist in building a **culture of peace in the minds of women and men** by recognising women's capacity for leadership and their contributions to non-violent conflict resolution. UNESCO places education at the heart of its efforts towards the building of a culture of peace and assists in the reorganization of educational systems, so that they become gender-sensitive and provide knowledge of human rights and democracy, skills in nonviolent conflict resolution, care and respect for the natural environment and cross-cultural understanding, in order to forge a genuine global¹³

Gender Sensitive Indicators

Gender-sensitive indicators demonstrate changes in gender relations in a given society over a **period** of time. They are used to assess progress in achieving gender equality by measuring changes in the status of women and men over a period of time. Gender-sensitive indicators may be used as a tool to assess the progress of a particular development intervention towards achieving greater gender equality.

As a measure of social change and the performance/effectiveness of government policy, gender-sensitive indicators can be described in terms of:

- (1) The derived quality to be reached;
- (2) The quantity of something to be achieved;
- (3) The target group who is affected by or benefits from the program or project; and,
- (4) The time frame envisaged for the achievement of the objectives (FAO 2001)¹⁴.

Other International indicators

Statistics Canada has undertaken considerable work in developing gender sensitive statistics. In October 1997 it published Economic Gender Equality Indicators . This report presents the results of a project commissioned by Federal-Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status

of Women to develop a limited set of economic gender equality indicators. The Indicators are a selected set of benchmarks to reflect core, interrelated aspects of women's and men's economic lives. They include income from a variety of sources in addition to earnings (measured in money), unpaid as well as paid work (measured in time), and education and job-related training (time and attainment measures that also look at gender predominance in fields of study). The Economic Gender Equality Indicators were designed to contribute to public policy discussion on social indicators, an understanding of women's realities and the promotion of gender equality. The indicators developed are also applied to Canadian provinces. A less comprehensive version Economic Gender Equality Indicators 2000 was produced in 2000 including a report Women in Canada 2000 and training materials

The UK Government's Office of National Statistics collaborates with the Women and Equality Unit in the development of gender sensitive statistics. A major project has been the 'Key Indicators of Women's Position in Britain' project. The aim was to identify a set of key statistics that accurately and meaningfully map women's position relative to that of men across a wide range of areas, and draw together statistics from a wide range of sources to provide a comprehensive census and a reliable and comprehensive baseline against which future changes and improvements can be monitored. The review was multi-faceted, comprising: (i) a consultation of users, (ii) assessment of the production and dissemination official gender statistics, (iii) identification of official statistics that are disaggregated by gender, distinguishing between data collection and dissemination, and (iv) identification of which official statistics are not currently gender-disaggregated. The very substantive report *Key Indicators of Women's Position in Britain* (Dench et al 2002) was published in November 2002 and has been disseminated widely. A four- page research summary and a shorter 'key findings' summary have also been published. The study utilised a wide range of statistical sources, from regular large-scale surveys, such as the Labour Force Survey (LFS), to ad hoc surveys, for example on work-life balance initiatives and their impact. It is proposed to continually update this information through the following means:

quarterly updating of women's position in the labour market using the LFS. This is already available as the WEU Gender Briefing , published every February, May, August and November on the WEU website www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/research;

a regular update census, which will look at all key indicators and collect the most up-to-date information. Many key indicators are covered by regular official surveys, so it would be relatively straightforward to update them;

a fuller appraisal (in a few years' time) which would aim for a more comprehensive update, and would also explore whether the key indicators should be revised and/or extended, in line with changes in women's lives and society in general.

The Swedish Parliament in 1994 declared that gender disaggregation is to occur for all official statistics 'unless special reasons exist'. Statistics Sweden commissioned the influential booklet *Engendering Statistics: A tool for Change* (Hedman et al 1996). The Swedish Government has supported activities to develop gender s¹⁵
<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/wiser/gio/genderindicator>

In short, Conway's six tips urge women to:

- 1. Not accept the status quo**
- 2. Understand and be able to articulate your value to an organisation**
- 3. Develop key competencies e.g. influencing skills, negotiating skills**
- 4. Seize opportunities when they arise**
- 5. Find a sponsor**
- 6. Be robust and resilient**

Gender equity in education

Gender equity in practicality refers to both male and female concerns, yet most of the gender bias is against women in the developing world. Gender discrimination in education has been very evident and underlying problem in many countries, especially in developing countries where cultural and societal stigma continue to hinder growth and prosperity for women. Global Campaign for Education (GCE) followed a survey called "Gender Discrimination in Violation of Rights of Women and Girls" states that one tenth of girls in primary school are 'unhappy' and this number increases to one fifth by the time they reach secondary schools. Some of the reasoning's that girls provided include harassment, restorations to freedom, and an inherent lack of opportunities, compared to boys. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) understands Education as a "fundamental human right and essential for

the exercise of all other human rights. It promotes individual freedom and empowerment and yields important development benefits."¹⁶

UN Special Rapporteur Katarina Tomasevki developed the '4A' framework on the Right to Education. The '4A' framework encompasses availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability as fundamental to the institution of education. And yet girls in many underdeveloped countries are denied secondary education. Figure on the right shows the discrepancies in secondary education in the world. Countries like Sudan, Somalia, Thailand and Afghanistan face the highest of inequity when it comes to gender bias.

Gender based Inequity in education is not just a phenomenon in developing countries. A New York Times article 'Teaching boys and girls separately' highlights how education systems, especially public school systems, tend to segregate. Boys and girls are often taught with different approach which programs children to think that they are different and deserve different treatment. However, studies show that boys and girls learn differently and therefore should be taught differently. Boys' learn better when they are kept moving while girls learn better sitting in one place with silence. Therefore, segregation of gender for this reasoning promotes gender equity in education as both boys and girls have optimized learning.¹⁷

Causes of gender discrimination in education

VSO is a leading independent international development organization that works towards eliminating poverty and one of the problems they tackle is gender inequity in education. VSO published a paper that categorizes the obstacles (or causes) into:

- **Community Level Obstacles:** This category primarily relates to the bias displayed for education external to the school environment. This includes restraints due to poverty and child labour, soil-economic constraints, lack of parental involvement and community participation. Harmful practices like child marriage and predetermined gender roles are cultural hindrances
- **School and Education System Level Obstacles:** Lack of investment in quality education, inappropriate attitudes and behaviours, lack of female teachers as role models and lack of gender-friendly school environment are all factors that promote gender inequity in education.¹⁸

Impact of gender discrimination on the economy

Education is universally acknowledged as an essential human right because it highly impacts the socio-economic and cultural aspects of a country. Equity in education will increase the work force of the nation therefore increasing national income, economic productivity and GDP (Gross Domestic Product). It reduces fertility and infant mortality, improves child health, increases life expectancy and increases standards of living. These are factors that allow economic stability and growth in the future. Above all, female education can increase output levels and allow countries to attain sustainable development. Equity in education of women also reduces the possibilities of trafficking and exploitation of women. UNESCO also refers gender equity as a major factor that allows for sustainable development. Making room for girls is an article published by The Economist which says:

*"Looking at recently-published UN statistics on gender inequality in education, one observes that the overall picture has improved dramatically over the last decade, but progress has not been even (see chart). Although the developing world on average looks likely to hit the UN's gender-inequality target, many parts of Africa are lagging behind. While progress is being made in sub-Saharan Africa in primary education, gender inequality is in fact widening among older children. The ratio of girls enrolled in primary school rose from 85 to 93 per 100 boys between 1999 and 2010, whereas it fell from 83 to 82 and from 67 to 63 at the secondary and tertiary levels."*¹⁹

Recommendations and solutions

Schools and teachers play a valuable role in promoting good race relations between people of different racial groups, eliminating unlawful racial discrimination and promoting equality of outcomes between these groups, but they need support in order to continue to do so.

For Schools: Inclusion of race equality concepts in lessons should be seen as a normal part of effective teaching and learning; local resources in lessons involving race equality, such as work by local black and minority ethnic writers, and in the history of local industrialization, should be used to stimulate pupils' interest and learning. From Race equality in education

One of the quotations, 'there is nothing more important than closing the gap between national

averages and the educational attainments of black kids, Muslim kids, travellers and gypsies, and most refugee kids.' But the significance of closing the achievement gap is manifold; it is fundamental to building a sense of belonging and to improving a sense of safety amongst all pupils. All of which are essential to pursuing race equality in schools. From Race equality and education

- For Teachers: All bullying is wrong and causes recipients great distress. Teachers should be alert to potential incidences of bullying and intervene when they become aware of it. There should be a framework within which all members of staff should operate in their response to such incidences. It is not a matter for an individual to deal with on their own. Whilst there are several similarities between racist bullying and other forms of bullying, there are significant differences. It is essential that teachers should be aware of these. Helping children and young people to understand this, and to act against unjustifiable inequalities, is one of the most important challenges facing teachers. ATL believes that this publication will help enable teachers to fulfil this role and help schools meet their legal obligations under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. From **Race equality and education**²⁰
- For Governments: One of the most efficient educational strategies for governments is to invest early and all the way up to upper secondary. Governments can prevent school failure and reduce dropout using two parallel approaches: eliminating education policies and practices that hinder equity; and targeting low performing disadvantaged schools. But education policies need to be aligned with other government policies, such as housing or welfare, to ensure student success. At this initial educational stage, direct public funding of services is associated with more effective governmental monitoring of early childhood services, advantages of scale, better quality across the country, more effective training for educators and a higher degree of equity in access.

For Society: Each and every one of us has a personal responsibility to confront these issues and to contribute to a change in societal perceptions and views. Whilst no one individual can act alone, changes in society can be achieved if we all work together. Discrimination is not limited to skin colour, however. The experiences, expectations and opportunities open to an individual can be as much dependent on their gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, or the national,

cultural and religious traditions into which they were born. The task is not easy. It can be frequently stressful as it involves confronting and challenging others – children, young people, their parents, and one's colleagues. Further, it also involves confronting and challenging oneself.

- Race Equality Toolkit: Universities in Scotland first published the Race Equality Toolkit – Learning and Teaching in 2006 in response to strong demand from the universities in Scotland for guidance on meeting their statutory obligations in terms of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. This resource is designed to assist academic staff, particularly those less familiar with race equality issues, to embed issues of race equality and of fostering good relations as part of learning and teaching and curriculum design. It does not provide a blueprint for how race equality should be addressed in teaching and learning but it encourages the academic staff to self-evaluate, and to review the curriculum and their teaching and assessment methods, in order to create as inclusive a learning **environment** as possible. The Toolkit, therefore, encourages the institutions to develop the corporate strategies necessary to support individual lecturers and departments in mainstreaming race equality issues.²¹

CONCLUSION:- I have arrived at the conclusion that while the gender equality is generally taken to encompass a broad spectrum of rights and opportunities, and thus is attractive to institutions, for this very reason it may provoke the hostility or be otherwise inutile to scholars who wish to focus on specific aspects of gender relations in development. In contrast, the term gender equity has specific socioeconomic underpinnings which could lend it a sharper, more concentrated and less value-laden beam, which is why scholars exploring issues as diverse as the tension between universalism and cultural relativism, to the impact of specific land reforms on gender relations in rural China, have preferred the term gender equity to equality.²²

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