

## A Taste of Empathy in the Social Science Class

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Teaching social science in upper primary has its own uniqueness since learners can understand changes in human society through the community around us, by close observations at homes, through newspapers, media etc. A teacher also gets similar experiences from community. But there is a big difference between adults' and children's experiences: children observe the things around them closely and build views after continuous brainstorming over social issues, facts, happenings, unlike adults who may have vast exposure but they are somehow conditioned about issues in a certain way. Thus most social issues may not surprise adults.

Let us think of a situation when a child, especially at 12 or 13, comes across a social evil for the first time. I usually meet such learners of social science in my school and spend my happiest hours with them when they ask me questions as, for example:

*Why are some slogans like 'Save the girl child' written all over the wall around us?*

*Why is it not written for boys?*

*Why are only our mothers always busy doing household work?*

*Why have female family members been burdened from morning to night?*

*"Why is some work, like cleaning utensils and housekeeping done only by female members?"*

For a teacher, the learner's involvement around community matters and the way they see the world usually comes through the questions, talks and reflections, especially during the classroom processes.

Here I am sharing some hands-on 'pictures' of my last year's classroom learning. Questions were frequent and close friends during our entire interaction when I was planning for my classroom and thinking of teaching the topic *Social changes between the 6th and 12th centuries*. I was at the point of assigning a project work and was trying to interweave their questions in my assignment plans and was completely absorbed in the process,

keeping in mind the 7th class, of the age group of 13/14 years. I was very excited about my preparation. Subjects like social science have wider angles and a great scope for unlimited discussions and debates. One can create, feel and pave the platform where children can cultivate their own interpretations irrespective of books.

Keeping all such things in my mind, I happened to design a project work for class 7 learners. We had thirty learners in our class and divided them into six subgroups. It was a relevant topic, in which the children were familiar with the complexities of medieval society and customs. We started working on *Comparative study of the Status of Women between 6th and 12th Centuries and the Modern Age*. We had chosen the course books, other medieval history books, library, newspapers. We also had resource people, like other teachers or resource persons from the school-DI, parents etc. It was planned to expand our catchment areas.

Projects took seven days to complete and learners were working beyond our regular classes. They then came to certain conclusions and had differences in their opinions, which made me very happy. Here are some discussions

Teacher – Can we begin class by getting clarity over some words / terminology used in our textbooks? "

Learners – Yes!

Teacher – So give me some examples!

Learners – *Sati pratha, parda pratha, baal vivah, shiksha se varjit hona etc.*

Teacher – Can anyone describe her understanding of sati-pratha?

A group of children – A custom where living women were forcibly put on the pyre of her dead husband.

Teacher – Can we imagine what pain a woman had during this? Was it as simple as talking about it?

A group. – No it was really a tough time for the entire family and village. Moreover, what happened to the children? We haven't learnt about them."

As adults, we work on contents and specifics whereas children concentrate on feelings. They ask about and feel about brutal events as they are part of joint families and emotions are contextual wealth in rural communities.

Teachers feel elated when children express their views, pause to think and reflect, talk and debate so that we can face the world with our own opinions.

As adults, we focus on the contents and specifics, while children focus on feelings. Being in joint families, they asked about the children of these brutally burnt mothers. Feelings and emotions are contextual wealth in rural communities. Unfortunately, children in metros are worst sufferers of this

As a teacher one gets elated when children have their own views, they pause to think and reflect. After some reading and debate, we had gone forward on the path to the social world with our own viewpoints.

Another group – I can imagine pain like once my finger burnt in a candle flame and it took weeks to heal.

Below are some notes from notebooks which they have discussed and written in the form of comparison.

Teacher – Oh! What do you think of the women who were burnt in the name of custom? Would have they agreed to it?

Learners – Perhaps not.....

Teacher – Lets discuss our findings. Could you suggest few comparisons between the past and present?"

A group – As a group we have come to the conclusion that there are as bad or even worse customs in modern times.

Teacher- How?

The group – We have lots of newspaper cuttings clearly showing that female foetuses are killed assert that girl children are killed at foetus.

Teacher – Yes It is being done. Sad to read this.

Learners – This and other evils such as child abuse and sexual harassments still exist. That means we are not different from the medieval age. Woman and girl children still struggle for existence.

Teacher – Unfortunately, this is our real world. But we have walked miles ahead of the old customs.

Learners – But we are in disagreement.

Teacher – Ok could you elaborate? I believe that we have travelled a good distance in education, poverty, technology etc."





classmate  
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सामाजिक विज्ञान

कच्ची मांस का समय तो पहले से कतर है। अभी तो लड़कियों को जन्म लेते ही मार देते हैं फेंक देते हैं कुछ कसपट में फेंक देते और सँसा जो करते हैं उसे पुलिस को पकड़ लेना चाहिए और यह कानून चुभता है। धन्यवाद

महिलाओं पर पाबंदियाँ

उ-2-16	महत्त्वपूर्ण 2 से 11वीं तक	आधुनिक काल / 19वीं सदी
- सति प्रथा	जन्म से पूर्व या जन्म के बाद	जन्म से पूर्व या जन्म के बाद
- बाल विवाह	पर मासिक	पर मासिक
- व्यक्तियों / यात्रा मफना	देख लेना	देख लेना
- धुँएँ खाना पकाना था	स्त्री को प्रेरित था व न्याय दे	स्त्री को प्रेरित था व न्याय दे
- शिक्षा, धूमना किना पार्जि	जन्म पर मार देना	जन्म पर मार देना
- दूसरी छात्रों का अधिकार	मरना / अमानविय व्यवहार	मरना / अमानविय व्यवहार
नहीं था	अपना निर्णय नहीं लेने देना	अपना निर्णय नहीं लेने देना
- अपने मन से विवाह नहीं करने का अधिकार	बिना हेतु	बिना हेतु
	पढ़ाई था	पढ़ाई था
	एकके छलासकों में भी	एकके छलासकों में भी
प्र.1	आपके अनुसार महिलाओं को कौन-कौन-से अधिकार मिलना चाहिए	साक्षरता लड़कियों को वेचना लड़कियों को गैर काम में
उ	गैर अनुसार महिलाओं को पढ़ने, का, खेलने का, शादी करने का, यात्रा करने का	पढ़ने का, खेलने का, शादी करने का, यात्रा करने का

व शीघ्र ही सीक्वेंस, शारीर महानत प मजदुरी से मुक्त किना किसी जति मरु भाँके समानता का अधिकार आदि चीजों से बचप का अधिकार

प्र.3 पुरुषों पर इस तरह की पाबंदी नहीं लगाई जाते। पुरुषों पर इस तरह की पाबंदी इस लिए नहीं लगाई जाती क्योंकि पहले सभी नीतियाँ-कानून सब शुरू ही कानून थे और स्त्री ही कानून थे और उस समय महिलाओं को कुछ कहे से ठरे थे और इस तरह का कारण है। प्रथम और ये हि इसी कारणों पर मजबूर थीं ये इस कारण से महिलाओं में हिममत दिखी थी उसे जिदा जला दिया जाता पी कुछ भी नहीं फहती उनके साथ मर्दा और व्यवहार और अत्याचार करते थे इसी कारण से पुरुषों पर पाबंदियाँ नहीं थी

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1. आपके अनुसार महिलाओं को कौन-कौन-से अधिकार मिलना चाहिए।  
उत्तर ⇒ मेरे अनुसार महिलाओं को निम्न निम्न अधिकार देना चाहिए।  
1. महिलाओं को घरों पर अधिकार देना चाहिए।  
2. महिलाओं को काम करने का अधिकार देना चाहिए।  
3. महिलाओं को शादी फलाका अधिकार देना चाहिए।  
4. महिलाओं को भित्त खूबकर रहना चाहिए।  
5. महिलाओं को अपनी पेट्या बचाने की भी देना चाहिए।  
6. महिलाओं को जिंदा जताने का अधिकार नहीं देना चाहिए।
2. पुरुषों पर इस तरह की पाबंदी क्यों नहीं लगाई जाती है ?  
उत्तर ⇒ पुरुषों पर इस तरह की पाबंदी इसलिए नहीं लगाई जाती क्योंकि पुरुषों की अच्छा मानते हैं सब जगह पुरुष लोग बैठक में जाते हैं और ऐसे पुरुषों को यात्रा करना, शादी करना, भित्तना खुलना करना चाहिए। व्यवस्था के आदमी के लोगों तक सम्मति नहीं बनाई गई। और अभी पति के सख्त पर स्त्री प्रथा नहीं होती है। इस तरह पुरुषों को नहीं लगाई जाती है।
3. रिपब्लिकी विवित्त  
उत्तर ⇒ विंगायत, नापपंजी, नाचनार, आखार  
विंगायत ⇒ उच्छा मानना या फिर प्रेम से प्रेम विना किसी आँखर के करना चाहिए। ऐसे लोगों को विंगायत कहते हैं।  
नापपंजी ⇒ बसक्या व अकमरुदेवी इस आंदोलन के प्रमुख प्रेरक थे। वे जल पोत, ऊँच नीच के भेदभाव को भी मिटाना चाहते थे। इसी तरह के आंदोलन जो शुरू करते हैं उसे नापपंजी, सिद्धों भी कहते हैं।  
नाचनार ⇒ वे कर्मकांडों व कई देवी-देवताओं की उपासना की जगह शिव या विष्णु के प्रति प्रेम और भक्ति को बहाव देना चाहते थे। उन्होंने आम लोगों

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सामाजिक विज्ञान

करना, यात्रा करना, लोगों से मिलना-जुलना ये सब बहुत बेकार समझा जा सकता है क्योंकि शादी करना, शादी महिलाओं तो गरीबों अपनी नहीं से नहीं करते हैं जब उनके आपसी मतभेद उनके घरवालों के तो तब कर सकते हैं ऐसे में नहीं कर सकते हैं।

प्र.2 आज के समय में महिलाओं के रिपब्लिकी दे? अपनी संमत्त से बताएँ।  
उत्तर ⇒ आज के समय में महिलाओं के रिपब्लिकी दे कि महिलाओं अपनी अपनी संमत्त से कर सकते हैं जब परिवार वाले बोले तो महिलाओं आज कर सकती हैं पर भी सकती हैं शादी भी कर सकती हैं व्यवसाय भी कर सकती हैं। उस समय पत्नी की पति मर जाय तो पत्नी को भी जिंदा चिता के साथ जला देते थे।

महिलाओं पर पाबंदियाँ

मध्यकाल 11वीं से 17वीं सदी तक	आधुनिक काल 17वीं सदी
- सती प्रथा	जन्म से पूर्व या जन्म लेते पर मार देना।
- बाल विवाह	देख लेना।
- व्यक्तियों / यात्रा मफना	स्त्री को देखना का कानून जन्म पर मार देना।
- धुँएँ खाना पकाना था	लड़कियों को टपाना देना।
- शिक्षा, धूमना फिर वा विजित	वतत। अमानवीर व्यवहार
- दूसरी शादी का अधिकार नहीं था	अपना निर्णय नहीं लेने देना (विवाह हेतु)
- अपने मन से विवाह नहीं करना	पढ़ाई था
	लड़के, लड़कियों में भेदभाव
	लड़कियों को वेचना
	लड़कियों के गंदे काम में धकेलना।

Another interesting follow-up was the open ended responses, similar in appearance and making the project sequential in terms of connectedness with the previous topic. Here is a part of it.

Q- What are some basic women's rights in your view?

They have jointly developed and written:

- 1 – Right to travel freely.
- 2 – Right to work.
- 3 – Right to marry a person of her own choice.
- 4 – All women should live together.
- 5 – Women should have opportunities to increase their self-esteem.
- 6 – No one has right to kill/burn a woman.

Views written above have come after analysis and a level of understanding which is shared in brief and has a glimpse of larger society which we would like to see. Trust grows through dialogue and debates and is an intrinsic part of teaching social science. How a child aged 12 or 13 years sees women rights is a good example of this.

Some of these opinions come from the children's context, some from their experiences and some from understanding the contents of Social Science.



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**Prakash** has been teaching at Azim Premji School, Dhamtari, since February, 2012. Prior to this, he was a school teacher for over 16 years in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, which included tribal, rural and urban setups. He has worked with children of standard 1 to standard 12. English, History and Biology are the subjects he teaches. He has also worked as a casual announcer in AIR Raipur, Chhattisgarh. He may be contacted at [prakash.gautam@azimpremji.org](mailto:prakash.gautam@azimpremji.org)