

WEEKLY ENGLISH PRACTICE

'Blatant Misogyny' In Indian English Exam

17/03/22 / **Keyword: Exam**

Nationwide exam for teenagers included passage indicating female independence was undermining discipline in the home.



Credit: *Feminism in India* feminisminindia.com

An Indian exam board has withdrawn a passage from an English exam that appeared to promote the subservience of wives, after an **outcry** over “**blatant** misogyny”.

All students have since been awarded full marks for the comprehension section of the exam covering the passage, which appeared to explicitly state that women’s independence was **undermining** discipline and parenting in the home. The passage appeared in an English language and literature exam taken by 14- and 15-year-olds.

The offending passage contained lines such as the “emancipation of the wife destroyed the parent’s authority over the children” and “in bringing the man down from his **pedestal**, the wife and mother **deprived** herself, in fact, of the means of discipline”.

The passage also said “it was only by accepting her husband’s way that a mother could gain obedience over the younger ones” and “wives stopped obeying their husbands ... the main reason why children and servants are undisciplined”.

After students, teachers and parents objected, Sonia Gandhi, the president of the opposition Congress party, drew attention

to the exam. Gandhi **read** the passages **aloud** in parliament on Monday and voiced her disgust at the impact they could have had on India’s children. She described the exam as “**atrocious**”, “shockingly regressive” and perpetuating “**blatant** misogyny”.

“The entire passage **is riddled with** such condemnable ideas, and the questions that follow are equally nonsensical,” said Gandhi. “It reflects extremely poorly on the standards of education and testing, and it goes against all norms and principles of a progressive and empowered society.”

After the **outcry**, the Central Board of Secondary Education said it was withdrawing the passage. “The matter was referred to a committee of subject experts. As per their recommendations, it’s been decided to drop the passage,” the board said in a statement. All students would be given full marks for the passage, it added. 📄 📄 📄 *page 2*

Useful vocabulary

blatant: very obvious

outcry: a strong expression of public disapproval or anger

to undermine: to reduce the effectiveness, power or ability of something

pedestal: used in reference to when someone is uncritically admired

to deprive: to prevent someone from having or using something

to read something aloud: to speak audibly

atrocious: of very poor quality

to be riddled with: to be filled with (something undesirable)

to shift something: to change something

plaudits: an expression of praise or approval

Let’s chat about that!

1. What date does International Women’s Day fall on?
2. Have you ever seen examples of **blatant misogyny**? Explain it/them.
3. Should “wives obey their husbands”? Why/not?
4. In your opinion, why are girls’ literacy rates behind boys’ in Indian schools?
5. Do you think gender sensitisation (see text) is a good idea? Why/not?

